

LOVE'S DISGUISE
OLIVER MADDOX HUEFF





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LOVE'S DISGUISES
A BOOK OF LITTLE PLAYS
(BEING FOUR OF A SEQUENCE AND ONE OTHER)
BY OLIVER MADOX HUEFFER



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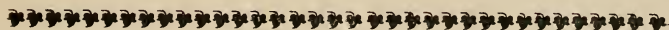
THE FIRST OF THE
PLAYS, CALLED
LOVE AND DEATH.



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LOVE AND DEATH.

Scene.—The Entrance to the Temple of Death.



C H A R A C T E R S

The Priestess of the Temple of Death.

Two Young Lovers.

A Little Child.

An Old Man.

A Pilgrim.

A King.



LOVE AND DEATH.

✦ SCENE.—*The Scene is outside the portico of a great grey-stone temple. It stands in the desert, part only of the portico being seen. In front of this is a high stone throne, curiously carved, on which a woman's form is seated. She is robed in white clinging garments that hang upon her like a shroud, and the lower part of her face is veiled. Round her head clings the symbol of eternity, a golden snake. Her face is like that of a snake, with low, broad forehead, covered far down with black thick-coiled hair, and dark almond-shaped eyes. She leans her head upon her hand, and looks straight in front of her as if awaiting something. Beyond the throne stretches the desert, reaching in the far distance to low foothills. It is dotted with thorn-trees, but is otherwise bare and barren.*

✦ *It is evening, gradually darkening as the sun sets and changing in colour from orange to greenish yellow. When the play is about half through, the moon rises over the distant hills, and the stage gradually grows light again. There is no sign of human life or habitation.*

✦ *To the woman enters a young man. He is clad*

like a mediæval pilgrim, in a sad-coloured robe, with a hood which is drawn over his head. He appears fatigued and stops to rest, leaning upon a long staff. He bows deeply on seeing the throned woman, who, however, takes no notice of him.



Pilgrim. Forgive me, lady, if I should thrust myself upon your thoughts. I have come far, and am weary and athirst.

Priestess. The earth lies all around you whereon to rest—there, beyond yon hill, is the river, where you may quench your thirst.

Pilgrim. Pardon me, lady, is there no village near—no human habitation that I may seek? The dew is falling heavily, and I have come a long and lonely path. I am aweary of my own company, and athirst for the touch of a friendly hand. There is at least some peasant's cot at hand?

Priestess. There is no human habitation near.

Pilgrim. This vast temple—these massive columns—surely it is strange that they should stand thus in a barren desert?

Priestess. This is the place of Fear. There are few that come here willingly, and those that come return but seldom. It is the Temple of Death. It is not well for men to look Death between the eyes.

Pilgrim. How so? I have looked him many times between the eyes, but never saw I aught to fear in him.

Priestess. Have you come here to bandy words with Death? You are a brave man, surely?

Pilgrim. It was but chance that brought me to this place. Though indeed I see not why I should not bandy words with him here, rather than in any other place? Death is everywhere.

Priestess. This is his temple—I his Priestess. This is his abiding place.

Pilgrim. Pardon me, lady, but that cannot be. Death is not found in any single place. He spreads himself about the world—invisible. Mostly he comes by night. He fears the light, for Light and Life are one.

Priestess. Here in this place he shows himself through me. To me his powers are delegate. To me is it given to kill—to spare and to kill. I am his servant—Priestess of his Altars.

Pilgrim. Then have I found what I came to seek.

This then is the far-famed Temple of Death, and you the successor of that long line of votaries who keep here his fires burning eternally. Pshaw! It is as I thought. His Priestess is but a feeble woman, and his temple—as I live, it is more suited for some puny earthly monarch, than for the King of Terrors, as Friend Death loves to be called by those who fear him.

Priestess (making an angry gesture). Mortal, you would do well to pick your words, being come hither. He who approaches Death is wise to clean his heart, and leave foul words behind him. I doubt I should do well to slay you where you stand.

Pilgrim (smiling and bowing). That were uncourteous, lady, being but so newly come hither.

Priestess (putting her hand to her forehead perplexedly). Strange—it is very strange! I have seen many mortals that have thus sought Death, but never one ere this who did not tremble when Death looked at him through my eyes. Are you indeed human?

Pilgrim. Human? Aye, lady—in part most human.

Priestess. And the other part?

Pilgrim. Divine or diabolical as others make me.

There are two sides to every one of us—even to Death himself.

Priestess. I know not why I do not slay you where you stand. I do not like you. Leave me! (*He makes no motion to go.*) Leave me, I say! (*Stretches out her hand towards him with a repellant gesture.*)

Pilgrim. Having come so far, may I not look a little time about me? What is yonder building used for? Not surely, but to hold an altar?

Priestess. It is but the upper gate, screening the road that leads on downwards towards the palace of him I serve. Through that gate all must pass, I with the rest, when he shall summon me. In the place that lies beyond he sits in judgment upon dead men's souls.

Pilgrim. He—or a higher power?

Priestess. There is no higher power. Those he condemns he punishes according to their crimes—the others, they go further—no man knoweth where.

Pilgrim. Only their Judge—and Death is but his instrument. Nay—I mean no offence—but I am wont to say the words I think. Lady—in all this tale—there is one thing I do not understand—though, maybe, it is but because men

lied to me. They talk, men do, of a great prophetess, veiled and mysterious, who holds in her grim fingers the keys of Life and Death. Mighty, she is, they say, no woman, but an immortal Goddess, fit mate, as mate indeed she is, for him whom you call master. She is above all mortal fears and passions, and she holds the balance of men's lives in her unprejudiced fingers. Where is she?

Priestess. Am I not she, think you?

Pilgrim. Indeed I think not so. You are no Goddess. Fair indeed you are, but not as Goddesses. Yours is flesh and blood, warm lips, bright eyes, and supple, slender arms, that are more fit for clinging round some brave young fellow's neck, than waving incantations in a desert. Nay—there's no offence. Why, when you show offence, you prove yourself a woman. Again, you own Death for your master—would an Immortal serve him? Lady, you may boast beauty that's divine—but there your Godhead stops. You're but a woman—and for that fact I, for one, hold you more in honour than half a hundred heartless Goddesses. Only I wish that you knew Love—but, truly, him you may meet with any day, almost before you know it.

Priestess. Goddess or not—helpmeet of Death or but his instrument—I have one power that makes me more than mortal. Those that flout at Death, mocking his terrors while Life backs them up and hides those terrors from them—those that insult his altars and they that serve them—such fools I have the power to slay before they reach his gates. For them there is no further judgment—they are condemned—there is no hope for them—and no return.

Pilgrim. Are you so sure of that?

Priestess. Take care, lest I prove it on your body. Do I but raise my hand upon you, your fettered groans will echo through Eternity.

Pilgrim. I laugh at locksmiths—never yet saw I the prison walls could bar my entrance, or my going out, when so it pleased me.

Priestess. In truth you vapour manfully—all young men are boasters, but you are a very king of vapourers. Well for you that I am not the thin-skinned woman that you take me for—but, in sooth, you do amuse me—never saw I your like—so you shall live.

Pilgrim. Thanks, noble lady, for your clemency. Hist! Whom have we here?

Priestess. Two mortals that have come to speak with me. I did not send for them.

Pilgrim. A stripling and a girl. They seem young to seek Death out uncalled for.

Priestess. Doubtless they have been sent to me by Love—you have heard of him—he is a good servant of him I serve.

Pilgrim. Servant! I had heard he was Death's master.

Priestess. Listen and you shall hear.

(Enter Ianthe and Strephon. They prostrate themselves at the feet of the Priestess.)

Priestess. Who are you that come to me uncalled for?

(The two look at each other, each wanting the other to begin. Finally Ianthe speaks.)

Ianthe. We are come to seek kind Death—that in his arms our Love may fructify, which here in Life is doomed to barrenness.

Priestess (aside to Pilgrim, with a smile of triumph). Did I not tell you Love had sent them here?

Pilgrim. All is not yet said. To me it seems Despair has sent them, masking herself as Love.

Strephon (to Ianthe). See, Ianthe—she smiles upon us.

Ianthe. Dearest, it is well for us we came. *(To Priestess.)* May we then pass, Holy One?

Priestess. Nay, you must tell me more before I let you pass.

Ianthe (to Strephon). You tell her, dearest. Her eyes make me afraid.

Strephon. If our prayer be voiced by your sweet lips, surely she will grant it—for your voice would move Osiris himself.

Ianthe. Well—since you put it thus, I will. (*To Priestess.*) This is Strephon—I, Ianthe. We love each other; but my father to-morrow gives me to another wooer—therefore we seek the aid of Death, that we may love for evermore and do no crime in loving.

Priestess (with a scornful smile). Had you not better call for death upon your other wooer?

Strephon. That will we not—for he is an honourable man—and I do protest he loves Ianthe dearly. It is no crime in him to love her—look on her face—would not the very Gods go creeping but to win a smile from her?

Ianthe. You look upon me with a lover's eyes, dear Strephon, though truly I do think he loves me too—and he is a worthy man whom I hold much in honour.

Strephon. This to me—who but a little back you swore had all your love—Oh base! base Ianthe! I will go kill myself—but first, by all the Gods I swear I'll have the fellow's blood.

Ianthe. Nay, Strephon dear, be not so jealous of me.
I did but jest—I swear I did but jest.

(They embrace and murmur endearments to each other.)

Priestess. Peace, fools! Will you desecrate even my altars with your lovers' babblings? Take heed!
—Death is stronger than Love.

Strephon. Nay, Holy Priestess—our love can never die—therefore is it mightier than Death.

Priestess. Well, in a little you will prove it. Die—if you wish it. Firstly you must bathe in the waters of Lethe—to purify yourselves of earthly passions.

Ianthe. The waters of Lethe! The river of forgetfulness—what?—and forget our Love!

Priestess. So it is.

Together. Then we will not die.

Priestess. Have it as you will—I care not. Now or later, it matters not. Some day you must die.

Together. Then is there no help for us either in this world or the next.

(They turn from her and walk off, hand in hand, the picture of despair. The Pilgrim goes after them and whispers to them.)

Pilgrim. Silly children—do not despair thus. She knows not what it is she says.

Together. What say you?

Pilgrim. She is but Death's handmaid, and therefore thinks him mightier than he is. Death has a master too, and his name is Love. This river of Lethe she speaks of is but to purge the grosser passions from you—Love it cannot touch.

Strephon. Then, Ianthe dear, were it not better to go back and die at once—for to-morrow it will be too late.

Ianthe. I was so happy, hearing that our Love can never die, that I had quite forgot to-morrow. Yes—we will go back.

Pilgrim. Tut, tut! Go home—go home—you will find your father's heart is changed, or I err greatly.

Together. Let us go to him.

(They run off cheerfully, hand in hand.)

Priestess. What said you there to yonder fools?

Pilgrim. I did but whisper a little encouragement into their ears, and they—*(He laughs)*—they believed me—Ha! ha!—as if it were the whisper of—of—why—of Love himself. Lady, I think you did not prove your point on them.

Priestess. They were too young—their eyes are not yet opened to the light. When they are grown older they will understand how Love and Death stand to each other.

Pilgrim. Here come another pair—an old man and a child. Truly, lady, you have many suppliants—almost as many as has Love himself.

Priestess. This is an old man that I sent for because his time is ripe. What he wants with the child I do not know.

(An old man enters, leading by the hand a little child. The old man prostrates himself at the feet of the Prophetess and grovels horribly in the sand. Meanwhile the little child stands upright and looks about her unconcernedly. Suddenly she sees the Pilgrim, whereupon she at once smiles gaily and kisses her hand to him.)

Priestess (severely to the old man). So, you are come at last—you have been long in coming.

The Old Man (grovelling). Holy Priestess, spare me—a little time—only a very little time. Life is so sweet—let me but live a few more years. Oh! spare me—spare me.

Priestess. You are an old man now—think you, you can live for ever?

The Old Man. Oh! Holy one, I am afraid to die. I am afraid. It is so dark and cold there. I am not so old yet. See—I can walk upright—my limbs are strong and supple. I do not use this

crutch in idleness. If it were my wife now—she is old—but I, I have years to live.

Priestess. Pass—onward to the gate. Your time is come.

The Old Man. A little time—a little, little time. Hear me—I am not prepared—I did not think of Death. Give me but a little time to make my preparations. Oh! I may have done wrong things, and if I think of them I will repent. I may lose my soul if I have not a little time for repentance. Only a very little time—a week? (*Priestess shakes her head.*) A day? (*She shakes her head.*) An hour?—a short five minutes?

Priestess. You should have thought of your repentance while you still had time. (*Holding up an hour-glass.*) See—the last sands of your life are running down. You must pass onwards.

The Old Man. Look—I have brought my little granddaughter. Take her instead of me. I would have brought my wife, who is an old, old woman—you would scarcely believe me if I told you how old and grey she is. But she—she is cunning, and she would not come. Ah! I hate her. (*With a cunning leer.*) This child I brought, she is my grand-daughter. I told

her I would show her pretty sights. Look—she is but a child—she has no crimes to weigh her down like me. Will you not take her in my place? See—what a pretty child it is. Smile at the lady, Chloe. See—there—surely you will take this pretty child in place of an old man. You will go with the lady, Chloe, will you not? She will give you the pretty things I promised you.

The Little Child (in a shrill treble). I don't mind—I don't much like her face, but I am not afraid of her—if she is going to give me pretty things; but I would rather go with that nice, kind man there. I like his face better than hers.

The Old Man. What man? I see no man. The child is mad.

Priestess (looking at the hour-glass). Your time is finished. The last grain is fallen. On with you.

(She lifts her arm and waves with her hand towards the temple. The old man—as if forced onwards by some unseen power—totters towards it—screaming shrilly and struggling to return.)

The Little Child. Grand-dad! Grand-dad! The pretty things you promised me—you have

never given them to me. Oh! he has gone away and left me.

(The old man looks back at her and shakes his fist menacingly before he disappears. The child begins to cry, when the Pilgrim goes to her, bends down and kisses her on the forehead.)

Pilgrim. You shall have pretty things—I promise you. Now run home, little Chloe. Your mother is seeking for you, and in her hand she holds, oh! such a wondrous toy.

(The child runs off, looking back and smiling at the Pilgrim, who smiles back and kisses his hand to her.)

Priestess. It is strange. The child saw you—yet the old man could not. Yet you did protest you are but human, and none dare lie to me.

Pilgrim. The old man's eyes were thickly covered with the rime of age. He could see nothing but the fate before him.

Priestess. Well, had not Death conquered Love in him?

Pilgrim. Bah! Love had spread his wings and left him years ago—Love cannot stoop to such a man as that. He was not worthy of Love—only of Death.

Priestess. There are many worse than he have passed before me.

Pilgrim. Your King must have a motley crew of subjects. (*There is a sound of distant music and voices.*) Listen!—here comes a mightier visitor. This should be a King—from the noise he makes in the world.

(*The sounds grow louder and resolve themselves into barbaric Oriental music—tempo di marcia. At the same time is heard the shuffling of a multitude of feet in the sand, and a red glare of torch-light gradually comes upon the stage in sharp contrast to the blue moonlight. Many voices are heard.*)

Voices. Room—room for the great King—the King above all others—at the sound of whose voice the world is silent—beneath whose footsteps the earth trembles! Room for the Salt of the Earth!—room, make room!

(*Enter a King. He stops before the throne of the Priestess, but does not make any such obeisance as did the others.*)

The King. You sent for me, O Priestess! As it is your master's wish I am come. But be brief with your business, for my retinue await me. I go to a feast which is set out for me in the Great City.

Priestess (scowling at him). Dismiss your following.

I did not send for them. This is not the place to play at pomp.

The King. I am the King. They are my bodyguard. I travel not without them.

Priestess. Send them away, I say.

The King. Well, since it is a woman asks it of me.

(He shrugs his shoulders and waves his hand to his followers to retire. The torch-light gradually dies away, leaving him standing in the moonlight.)

Priestess. Those who visit Death should bend the knee before the King of Terrors.

King. Did one grant that, it would not follow that one should bend the knee before his handmaid—even were one of the common folk. But I—I also am a King; I bend the knee to none. Your master sends me a message—using you as his mouthpiece. I bear my own reply. Tell me now your message, and be brief with it.

Priestess. You know the messages I am wont to carry?

King. Unto the commonalty—yes—

Priestess. Unto all men alike.

King. The laws that hang like fetters about common men are but like cobwebs when they bind a King.

Priestess. You talk too much about your royalty.

Remember, in Death are all men equal.

King (laughing). Nay, lady fair—only in Love are all men equal. Now tell me. Have I looked my last upon the sun?

Priestess. That is as yet not certain.

King. Does it depend upon myself?

Priestess. That is as maybe.

King. Tut—tut! Woman, remember whom you speak to. I am not wont to be trifled with.

Priestess. You carry yourself boldly for one in my master's presence.

King. Bah! Why should I fear Death? He is as my familiar. For a King must live with Death—must look him daily in the face—sit with him even at the marriage-feast—must every night have death for bed-fellow; see him stalk grimly in the battle-field, and know him daily, deftly hidden in the hand of some ambitious, fawning courtier. No—I have faced him often, and, up to now, he always fled before me. Why should I fear him now he sends for me—for me—the King?

Priestess. Always this "I, the King." How when the King is dead?

King. My fame dies not with me. To the common

people I have been merciful, protecting them from their oppressors. My people love me. Love is mightier than Death. I shall live a King in their hearts long after my bones are dust.

Priestess. Enough of talk—you are the King of boasters as of other things. To-day my message comes not from my master, but from myself.

King. What! You—you dared send for me in idleness?

Priestess. No, not in idleness. Listen, King. I hear that you have cast insults upon me. It would seem that you forget that my master vests in me some of his powers.

King. I insult you! I insult a woman. (*Smiling.*) You are the first that ever said that of me.

Priestess. At your feast—one of your drunken revels—you said, so that all men could hear you, that I was the fairest woman in this land—which may indeed be true—yet have you no cause to say so.

King (laughing). Is it become an insult to call a woman fair of face?

Priestess. More—if that were not enough. In your drunken vapourings you swore that you would drag my veil from off my face, and would

snatch a kiss from my lips—I, the Priestess of the Temple of Death.

King (laughing). Did I say that? Did I indeed? I had forgot it. Why, now I see your face so near, I have more than half a mind to carry out my vow. Your face *is* fair—I never saw a fairer. (*He makes a step towards her.*)

Priestess. This to my very face!

King. By Apis and Osiris, but your mock anger—for mock it is, I'll swear—makes you a thousand times the fairer. I understand, ha! ha! why it was you sent for me. Come, pretty one, give me the kiss I ask for. You shall have this gold chain in memory of the day you kissed the King. Gods! but you are fair. You shall have more. Come, you shall be my love! I'll give you a golden bower—the like of which you never dreamed of. I'll take you from these grim, uncivil deserts to my own palace, and you shall have kings' daughters to be your handmaidens. I'll dress you in such shimmering robes of light, showing the beauties they pretend to hide, as never yet were seen in all the world. You shall have gold and gems—why, you shall bathe in gems if you've a mind to. You shall be first of all my women, and all

the world shall bow to do you reverence.
Come—but you shall. I swear it—on the
King's honour!

Priestess. Keep off, fool—or I slay you.

King. What, would you trifle with me? You shall
come—I say you *shall*. Come willingly—I
warn you, pretty one. Or if I must use force to
bring you to my will—I'll keep you but till I
grow weary of you, and then I'll give you to
the basest of my slaves, as I would cast aside a
worn-out glove. There, I see you know the
wiser way. Come—I'll have a kiss—as a
pledge you love me—though Death himself
should try to come between us. Tut, do not
shrink from me—you cannot escape me. (*He
advances and throws his arm around her waist.*)

Priestess. Since you will have it—die!

*(She turns on him like a wild cat and gives
him a sharp blow on the forehead, with her
open hand. He instantly releases her, puts
his hand to his head in a dazed way—staggers
back and falls with a crash to the ground.
He struggles convulsively for a short time,
writhing like a crushed worm, then falls over
on his back—dead. She looks down upon him
calmly from her throne, while the Pilgrim*

goes and stoops down over him, feeling his heart. He looks up without rising.)

Pilgrim. Dead as a stone. It was ill done, lady.

The punishment is all too great for the offence.

Priestess. Friend, did you not say that Love was mightier than Death—yet, sure that fellow's love for me is dead?

Pilgrim. Love—there was no love for you in him—it was but Love's bastard half-brother, Lust—a poor weakling that cannot even overcome the girl, Chastity, save when she is asleep—a fellow that shrinks away to nothing if but the feeblest of the Virtues look at him.

Priestess. So, I have heard, does Love.

Pilgrim. Love—he can conquer all the Virtues put together, with all the Vices to aid them—aye—and has done it too a score of times.

Priestess. You may talk much of Love, but there you see the power that Death has given to one of his servants.

Pilgrim. Lady, did you but know the power that Love can give a woman over a man, you would leave Death and become a votary of Love. This (*pointing to the dead King*) was at the best a feeble woman's trick—a thousand silly women have done as much. It is easy to kill; to create—that is Love's chiefest power.

Priestess. I have killed the greatest King in all the earth, because he did insult me. Is not that power?

Pilgrim. It is to be hoped that when his servants find it out you may not bitterly repent of it.

Priestess. What do you mean?

Pilgrim (*shrugging his shoulders*). The punishment for king-killing is heavy in these parts. Your limbs, lady, are but human—they can feel the lash and the fire and the knife as well as another's.

Priestess (*shrinking back*). Ah, ah! I cannot bear pain—I am afraid to die. Bah! why should I fear? There is not a man in all the countryside would dare to lay a finger on me.

Pilgrim. Not alone, I grant; but let him get in a crowd of his fellows, and let some one whisper among them, "The King we love is dead. Yon woman is his murderess. We will have revenge!" Then all the air would echo with their cries, "Revenge! She shall die!" Because you might slay a few of them, would the slings and the darts of the others hurtle through the air any the slower? Then, when some well-aimed stone had for a little bereft you of your powers, you might awake to find the faggots

blazing around the stake where you were tied, while all the people cried, "Death to the Sorceress!" Does the picture please you?

Priestess (covering her face with her hands and cowering in her throne). Oh! I am afraid! I am afraid! *(Turning suddenly upon the Pilgrim.)* Why do you taunt me thus? What have I done that you should speak such words to me? Was not the doom just that I meted out? Had he not deserved his punishment?

Pilgrim. I have no quarrel with the punishment, though I had acted otherwise were I in your place. Though indeed it is but a woman's trick to slay a man and then fear for the consequences.

Priestess. Say but a little more and you shall follow him, and when the people ask me for their King, then I shall point to your dead body, saying, "This fellow killed your king, and I have punished him."

Pilgrim (laughing). A pretty scheme and a worthy. It lacks but one thing.

Priestess. What is that?

Pilgrim. You know not how to kill me.

Priestess. Say but a little more and I will. I swear it.

Pilgrim. Consider that little said.

Priestess. Enough—your fate be upon your own head. You have willed it—therefore die! (*She jerks out her arm towards him as if throwing something. He stands unmoved, smiling at her. She makes the same motion with as little effect as before. She steps back in amazement.*) He should be dead by now. Have I lost my power?

Pilgrim. See, it is as I said. You cannot kill me. Now let us try another kind of charm.

(*He takes a step towards her, then folds his arms and stands looking at her very intently. She makes little feeble efforts as if to wave him off, and then drops her hands helplessly, comes down from her seat and walks towards him as if against her will. When she is a short distance from him she stops and looks into his eyes as if fascinated. After a little he removes his eyes from her face and steps aside. She remains motionless for a moment, then makes a short undecided step forward, which brings her to where the body of the King is lying. She looks downward, and giving a shrill exclamation kneels by its side.*)

Priestess. Why—what is this? He is not dead—not dead. (*She takes the King's head in her arms.*)

Yes—his heart has ceased to beat. (*Putting her hand to her forehead.*) Was it not I that slew him? No, no—it could never have been—I love him so. (*She presses his head to her bosom and croons over it as if it were a baby.*) No, no—my love—it is not really so; you are not dead—I know you are not dead. Soon you will wake again, and look up into my eyes who love you so. Sh! sh!—We must not wake him. He is tired, and where should he rest so well as on my bosom? It was a lie—whoever told you so. I kill him!—I, who would give my life did he but ask for it in jest. Dearest—I did not kill you—tell me that you know it. I kill you!—but because you wished for a kiss; why—when you wake you shall have thousands of them. Dearest, awake! it is time that we were gone. Let us to your palace—the bower you spoke of—those rich robes—oh! how I long for them if but they make me seem fairer in your eyes, my King. What if you should tire of me—what matters it if but you have loved me for a little while? I will go from you, and I will stand by the road-side when you pass by in all your glory, and I shall still be happy because I know you loved me truly once. Come

—my love—awake! (*She laughs.*) Ah! I understand—you are awake, but play that still you sleep until that I shall open your eyes with kisses. There, my love—and there—and there—and there! (*She kisses his eyes passionately.*) He does not answer me. Alas, alas! He is dead indeed—and it was I who killed him—I who love him so—Oh! my dear—my dear—come back to me—you shall have all that you asked and more—only come back to me. Help me, kind sir, help me—he is my love, and he is dying. With your help I may revive him. Even though he be dead, my love is great enough to follow him into the halls of Death and bring him back to me.

Pilgrim. 'Twas but a little time ago you told me that Death was the conqueror of Love.

Priestess. I lied—I lied. I did not know Love then. I was a fool, and knew not what I said. O sir! in pity's name help me to bring my love again to me.

Pilgrim. It is too late. Your lover can return no more to you. Look at his lips—how blue they are and cold. Not though you kiss them a thousand times can they return one kiss of all of them. He is dead.

Priestess (*sitting up in a kneeling position with the dead King's head on her knees.*) What devil are you—that come here to me, robed as a holy pilgrim—a mortal man—for so you called yourself—and then cast spells upon me, causing me to slay my love? You said you were a mortal, and you lied.

Pilgrim. I said not mortal. “Human” was my word.

Priestess. Tell me who you are. If you are a God, then inflict upon me any punishment that you can name, and I will bear it willingly. (*Bending down over the King's body.*) But give me back my love. (*To the corpse.*) It was he that slew you—not I, I who love you so. Oh, forgive me! Indeed, indeed, you shall forgive me! (*Appears to listen intently.*) He does not answer me. Then he is dead. (*Buries her face in her hands and sobs. After a minute she turns fiercely on the Pilgrim.*) You shall answer me—I swear you shall. Who are you that say you are a man, yet work the miracles of a God—that mock my master, Death—the mightiest of all the Gods—even in his very Temple? Tell me who you are? In Pity's name—I do entreat you. Tell me!

Pilgrim. Woman, I am Love!

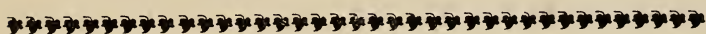
C U R T A I N .

THE SECOND OF
THE PLAYS, CALLED
A GOOD EXAMPLE.



A GOOD EXAMPLE

Scene.—A hillside in Arcady. *Time.*—The Greek Kalends



C H A R A C T E R S

Strephon, Corydon, Cymon — *Shepherds.*

Daphne, Phillis — *Shepherdesses.*

Baucis — *Wife of Philemon,*

Philemon — *An Old Man.*

Love.



A GOOD EXAMPLE.

✿ *SCENE.*—An open, grassy hill-side, stretching up towards the back of the Stage. About the centre stands an old gnarled hawthorn tree, covered with blossom. On the right of the Stage the hill slopes sharply downwards. Over it can be seen a wide view of the open country, chiefly meadow land, heavily wooded, with an occasional hamlet showing through the trees.

✿ *It is Spring-time, and the grass is dotted with daffodils and purple crocuses. On the left of the Stage are several young trees, being the commencement of a thick wood, which can be seen, stretching up a hill-side in the background.*

✿ *The Stage is at first empty. In the distance is heard a sound of singing, which gradually grows nearer and more distinct. A band of shepherds and shepherdesses dance in, piping and singing.*



S O N G .

Sing, Shepherds, sing!
For Spring is born.
O'er bough and thorn
His glittering veil
Of bloom is thrown.
Sing, Shepherds, sing!

Winter is dead,
Or banished.
We make no moan.
But lusty Spring,
Re-nascent, hail.
Sing, Shepherds, sing!

(As the song and dance proceed, enter Philemon and Baucis, an old, pleasant pair of country folk. The old man helps his wife to a seat on an upthrown root of the central hawthorn tree, and they listen appreciatively to the singing, nodding their heads in time to the dancing, and smiling one to the other.)

Philemon (when the song is finished and the young people gather round them). I have not heard such sweet singing, not—not since wife Baucis

Vivace.

Song of the Shepherds.

Arranged for
Two Flutes,
Oboe and
Clarinet.

The musical score is written for two flutes, oboe, and clarinet. It begins with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The tempo is marked 'Vivace.' The score is divided into three systems. The first system features a treble and bass staff with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. The melody is marked 'mf' and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The second system continues the melody, marked 'dolce.' and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics 'Sing Shepherds sing! For Spring is born For Spring is born' are written below the staff. The third system continues the melody, marked 'p' and 'mf'. The lyrics 'O'er bough & thorn His shimmering veil of bloom is thrown Winter is dead Or' are written below the staff. The score concludes with a final measure marked 'p'.

mf
dolce.
Sing Shepherds sing! For Spring is born For Spring is born
p
mf
mf
p

can-i-shed

We make no moan

But luscious Spring re-nascent

hail

Sing Shepherds sing Sing Shepherds sing

Pipes Shepherds pipe

And lift your rattle fest

For

sf

cres

f

m.g.

p

mf

f. m.g.

3

4

p

sempre p.

Spring is sweet And life and love with him are come.

Take each his dear

through the meadows roam For Spring For Spring is here Take each his dear

Handwritten musical score for a song. The score is written on three systems of staves. The first system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The third system also continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *f* and *p*. There are also some handwritten annotations like "Mr." and "Mrs." near the piano part.

delice

Spring is here The world for love for love is ripe

SF *mf* *p*

Ripe Shep-herds Ripe Ripe Shep-herds Ripe!

p *f*

p *f*

f

here was a young maiden. The lads, too—there are those among them who know how to finger a reed. Well, well, as the old trees die out there are always slender saplings springing up to take their place.

Baucis (*shaking her head*). Ah, dear Philemon, when I think of the pipe you played upon when we two were wooing (do you remember?—we plucked it from the bed of rushes where the swan's nest was)—these younger efforts sound to me but like the ghost of piping.

Philemon. Wife Baucis, wife Baucis, we old folk live only in dream-land, and what we think dreams are solid facts. Not that I was not a passable hand at a pipe in my young days—I was accounted the best of all the dales. My piping, though, was never anything to be thought of when you began to sing. I have not heard a girl-voice to-day that comes within hailing distance of what yours used to be. There, there, we are old folk now, that have had our day—now it is the young ones' turn to stand in the sunshine.

Baucis. Why, Philemon, you could play better than the best of them to-day, I warrant you, had you but a pipe. (*Philemon shakes his head, but with a pleased smile.*)

Cymon. Here, father Philemon, here is a pipe—a good one, I promise you—for I made it myself from a reed from that very spot you talk of where the swans breed. Play to us on it.

Philemon (*still shaking his head*). Ah, Cymon, the reeds may grow as lustily as ever and the swans breed as freely—but they are not the same reeds, and it were hard to recognise the lips that played upon them.

All the Young People. Play to us, dear father Philemon.

(The old man takes the pipe and fingers it with a reflexive smile, but still shakes his head.)

Philemon. You would but make a mock of me, young people. (*The young girls gather round him, kissing and fondling him, entreating him to play for them.*) Be careful, pretty ones (*smiling*), or wife Baucis will grow jealous of me—and then (*winking*) a nice life she will lead me—I promise you. (*The two old people smile at each other and press one another's hands.*) Well, I will try—but I misdoubt me my hand has lost its old cunning. (*He puts the pipe to his lips, and fumbles with his fingers among the note-holes, but only the*

feeble ghost of a tune comes. At last he lays it aside with a sigh.) You see, it is as I said. I cannot play upon it. There is no fool like an old fool.

Baucis. You played as well as ever you did, Philemon. If there was aught wanting, it lay in the pipe—look at it—as badly cut a pipe as ever I saw. These young men—that think themselves so much cleverer than their elders—they cannot cut a reed as reeds were cut when we were young.

All the Girls. Surely it was the pipe. That silly fellow Cymon knows not how a pipe should be cut.

Philemon. The pipe was good enough, it was the fingers that played upon it were past their work. Come, wife Baucis, you will grow chill sitting here on the grass. Let us go within doors. (*Aside to Baucis.*) We cast the shadow of our age upon their glad young lives. Let us go home to the hearth-side, our time is past for dancing in the sunlight.

(They rise together, he tenderly putting her cloak about her shoulders, and exeunt side by side.)

Cymon (*looking after them*). They are a pleasant pair—old Philemon and Baucis his wife.

Strephon. Please God that we be so true-hearted
when we grow old as they.

Cymon. What says Daphne to that?

All. Aye, what says Daphne? Ha! ha!

Daphne (looking very confused). What do you mean?
I do not understand you.

Strephon. Yes, Cymon, what is it you mean?

Cymon. Oh! I mean nothing—but I have two good
ears from my mother and a pair of passable
eyes from my father; and surely when one sees
a shepherd that wanders all day long by the
river, neglecting his flocks—

A Shepherdess. —and a shepherdess that looks at
her reflection in a certain pool for hours to-
gether—

A Shepherd. —and when, in passing, one hears the
weirdest pipings under a window in the night-
time—

Another Shepherdess. —and sees hair deftly braided
up in a snood that used to fly loose to the
winds—

Another Shepherd. —or hears strange sounds of
voices, such as no sheep ever uttered, coming
from under the walls of a fold—

Cymon. —or, wandering by chance in a wood, hears
this (*kisses the back of his hand*)—a strange,

incomprehensible, senseless-sounding sound as ever I heard.

The First Shepherdess. When one sees all this—

The First Shepherd And hears more than all—

The Second Shepherd. Then one thinks—

All. Then one thinks—

Cymon. Of what Philemon and Baucis used to be when they were young. Ha! ha!

All. Ha! ha! ha!

Daphne. I have also two ears and a pair of eyes, and they tell me that you are all eaves-droppers and tale-bearers and listeners at cracks in doors, such as it were shame to be.

All. Ha! ha! ha!

Strephon. Dear heart, it is no shame that all the world should know that we love each other.

Daphne. And will soon be wed, as will never you—or you—or you—or you (*pointing at various girls one after the other*)—but, truly I am foolish to be angered, for I know you are all glad that Strephon and I are happy.

All the Shepherdesses. That we are (*looking shyly at the Shepherds*), and envy you every one.

Cymon. Come—we are not met here to talk philosophy. Come to our dance! Pair off, and leave these lovers to wish they had been wed as long as Philemon to Baucis.

The First Shepherdess. Alas! poor things, long ere
that they will find that Love—

All Shepherds. —is a good servant, Strephon—

All Shepherdesses. But a bad, bad, bad master,
Daphne.

Cymon. Since that is so, we'll hire him for a day.

(*To the First Shepherdess.*) I love you dearly—
till to-morrow.

The First Shepherdess. And for to-day I am your
truest dear.

All Shepherds. I love you—

All Shepherdesses. —for to-day.

(*They all pair and dance off the stage singing
a second verse of the song with which they
entered.*)

S O N G .

Pipe, Shepherds, pipe!
And lift your nimble feet,
For Spring is sweet,
And Love and Life
With him are come.
Pipe, Shepherds, pipe!

Take each his dear,
And through the woodlands roam,
For Spring is here.
The world for Love is ripe,
Pipe, Shepherds, pipe!

(The song gradually dies away in the distance. Strephon and Daphne are about to embrace, but suddenly stop, on seeing that Corydon and Phillis have also remained behind.)

Strephon. Why, Corydon, will you not join the dancers?

Corydon. Not I, indeed! Why should I? I have other things to think of. For that matter, it is but a fool's trick, dancing—more fit for beasts than men of sense.

Daphne. You, Phillis, who have so clear a voice—they will miss you in the singing.

Phillis. Then they must miss me, for I am going home.

Strephon. Going home!—upon the fairest day in all the year!—when the meadows are aflame with daffodils, and the woodlands shimmering with blue-bells; when all the young lambs wait to dance a measure against you, and not a bird in all the hangers but is ready to match his note with yours. Going home!

Daphne. Let her go home, if she know no better, We shall not be the sufferers.

Strephon. I am so happy in my love, I cannot bear that others should throw their happiness aside so wantonly. Corydon, Phillis, go join the others, I do beg of you.

Phillis. Your words were kindly meant, Strephon, and I thank you for them, but, truly, I shall be happier at home. I am working there on a piece of linen, that my mother spun for me. I am setting on it the most cunning embroideries, all in blue and green and purple, the prettiest work that ever was seen. My mother thinks that I shall wear it myself, and vows that I shall look a queen in it—but I know better than that. When it is finished—and that will not be so long now—I shall take it down to the market. Many foreign merchants come there, that will give me much money for it. That money I shall put by, with other that I have gained in like manner, in the old oaken chest that stands in the chimney corner. Thus, in time I shall grow rich, and shall go out and see the world and all the wonders that they talk of beyond the mountains there, and I shall come back the wisest maiden in all the country side. Where will they be then, who, when they were young, thought of nothing but dancing and singing and falling in love?

Corydon. Just so say I, Phillis. Would that I also could go about my business in the like manner. Until to-day I had remembered nothing of this

annual junketing, and I had settled that this morning I would take the black-and-white heifer down to the market, for she is just now in the pink of condition and would fetch a good price—then there are the three ewes that have lost their lambs, them also I would have taken with me. So, early this morning I walked towards the fold, and behold, as I crossed the brow of the hill, I met the whole band of the shepherds, wreathed with flowers and ribbons like so many may-poles, dancing and piping along as if there were no such a thing as business in the world. Then I remembered that there is indeed no market to-day, all the world being gone a merry-making. So here I must sit and twiddle my thumbs and do nothing the live-long day.

Daphne. Are you selling three ewes, Corydon? Surely you have but two to sell.

Corydon. You forget the one I had as a lamb, from Perdita, before she died.

Daphne. What! Will you sell the pet lamb, that poor Perdita gave you in memory of her?

Corydon. Why should I not?—She is full-grown now and fat, and will fetch a good price—besides she is no good for breeding—her lambs have died each

year—but I shall not tell the man that buys her so.

Strephon. Now, Corydon, now I have done with you. He is no true shepherd that can do anything so base.

Phillis. You talk foolishly, Strephon. Corydon is right to sell her if he can get a good price.

Strephon. What, Phillis too? Come, dear Daphne, let us go and leave these two to drive a bargain over their grand-dads' bones, if they can settle on a price for them.

(Exeunt Strephon and Daphne, their arms round each others' waists.)

Corydon (looking after them). As silly a pair as ever I saw. One would hardly think to hear him speak now that at one time Strephon was as good a hand at a bargain as ever I wish to meet with. Now he is in love he thinks no more of his business than I do—of—of my old uncle's walking-staff. Love indeed drives those that suffer him to madness.

Phillis. I have heard my grand-dam call Love the Prince of All Fools.

Corydon. Then surely has Strephon become his Jester—a very Fool of Fools.

Phillis. He has found a fit mate in Daphne. How she

is changed would no one believe, who did not know her before this moon-sickness overcame her. Look at them now—there in yonder glade.

Corydon. Let us hide behind this hawthorn here. They will not think we see them. (*They get round to the side of the hawthorn opposite from the lovers and peep out cautiously, one on each side of the trunk.*) There, now they will think we are gone home.

Phillis. I hope they may not turn down some side-glade in the forest. We should lose all our sport.

Corydon. Never fear. Lovers are like sheep—they follow hard on one another's tracks, and turn neither to the right or the left unless the other lead them.

Phillis. See, they have stopped. Strephon is looking round.

Corydon. It is to see whether we are still here.

Phillis. I am glad we thought to step behind the tree-trunk. There—He could not see us. They are walking more closely together. (*A pause.*) Strephon has put his arm around her waist!

Corydon. I see no pleasure in putting my arm around a woman's waist—none but fools would do it—as well embrace a tree.

Phillis. Look,—now she leans her head upon his shoulder. It must be difficult to walk like **that**, I should think—what is the use of her neck if she cannot hold her head straight?

Corydon. Now he bends down and whispers close in her ear. It must be a pressing secret if not even the wind or the flowers may hear it.

Phillis. He has kissed her! She has actually let him kiss her—faugh! For shame—to let a man kiss her and they not yet wed. All Arcady shall know of it, I promise you.

Corydon. It is a fool's trick—kissing. My mother always kisses me and I her, because I know she loves it—but to kiss for pleasure!

Phillis. Now she sits down. Look, he lies at her feet.

Corydon. Like a dog before his master.

Phillis. She is bending down towards him. She kissed him! I swear she kissed him!

Corydon. I'll look no more. They are but fools who watch foolplay. I have thought of another ewe I can sell at the next market-day. You know it. The one that limps with its hind feet.

Phillis. It is time I got to my work. I would rather bend my eyes over my web than on the handsomest prince in all the world. Corydon, will

you believe me when I tell you that he has given her ribbons—yes, and brooches—and a true lover's knot in silver wire—and she has taken them from him. I know it for a sure fact. Think how low must Phillis be brought that she will accept ribbons and brooches and true lover's knots in silver wire from a man. I would not—from an angel—if it were a man angel.

Corydon. I differ from you, Phillis. She is wise to take them, finding him fool enough to give. I would not give anything to a woman—but at its fair price—not if it were Venus herself. The man that gives something for nothing will soon have nothing worth the giving.

Phillis. 'Tis very true. I am glad that there is one man left in Arcady who thinks as I do. For the rest—well, there must be fools in the world, or how could wise folk live? Now—farewell. If I go not home soon, the light will be gone.

Corydon. I must to the fold to think about the limping ewe.

(They are about to exit different ways when they are stopped by the entrance of Love, who comes disguised as a pilgrim.)

Love. Peace be with you, my children. I thank Heaven that I have met with you, for I have been wandering in the forest, and have lost the path. I pray you direct me the shortest way to the village. The day draws to its end and I have far to go.

Corydon. Why, holy pilgrim, how did you come here? We did not see you, yet from this hill one can command the whole country-side.

Love. You were so busy watching something in yonder wood that you took no note of me.

Phillis. We were watching two silly shepherd's that trow themselves in love.

Love. A rare jest that—though they might differ from you.

Phillis. What matters that? Have such silly people feelings to be considered? They were made for sensible folk to laugh at.

Love. Ah! pretty lady, it is easy to see that you have had no dealings with Love.

Phillis. No, indeed, nor ever will have. Love is the Prince of Fools—busy people have no time for dealings with him.

Love (to Corydon). You, gentle shepherd, I take it, are also no friend to Love.

Corydon. Indeed, holy father, you are right.

Love. God forbid that I should have anything to do with it—but I have heard it has its pleasant side.

Corydon. Perhaps for idlers there is good in it. I am a worker. Did the fairest lady in the world pray for my heart I would not give it her.

Phillis. Not if she were wealthy, Corydon?

Corydon. Not I. I make for myself, and I spend for myself.

Love. Poor Love! He would find a sorry welcome in these parts should he visit them. Well, well! Now, gentle shepherd, I pray you set me on my right road for the village, for I have far to go to-night.

Corydon. There is the village—straight before you—you can see the blacksmith's cottage looming white through the pine trees. Beyond it—some short three leagues—along a well-made road—lies the market town where we are wont to take our wool and bestial for sale. Come, I will show you the nearest way to it. (*Leads him a little way up the hillside.*) There you can see the smoke from the town blue against the mountain-sides beyond. You can avoid the village—there—where you see the sheep browsing, beside the copse of larches—there

you will find a path that takes you direct. Beyond the town, if you must go so far, you must get other guidance, for there is not a man in all the country-side has crossed the mountains—though no doubt it could be done were there any certainty of trading our wares with the out-folk.

Love. I thank you much—you also, fair maiden. Give you good day.

Phillis. Firstly give us your blessing, holy pilgrim. Ah me! I would I could visit half the lands you have been through.

Love. You might travel far and still be no nearer the end. Nay, nay, you are happier by your own hearth-side. *(They bend their heads before him to receive his blessing.)* May every happiness go with you both! *(He half turns from them, and, unseen, takes from his bosom a tiny phial, from which he takes a pinch of powder between his fingers. This, seeming to bless them, while their heads are bent before him, he sprinkles over them.)* Benedicite! *(Exit on left.)*

Phillis. He was a young man that—for a pilgrim. His face was very good to look upon.

Corydon. You did not think so, Phillis? I thought he was an ugly fellow.

Phillis. He had a handsomer face than yours, friend Corydon.

Corydon. Nay, do not say so, Phillis. You must not think of me unkindly, Phillis dear.

Phillis. Think unkindly of you, Corydon—that I should never do. We are too good friends for that—are we not?

Corydon. Good friends—um—(*with a sigh*). Why, yes, I suppose we are that, dear Phillis.

Phillis (*looking at him shyly*). I think I should be going to my needle.

Corydon. Go to your needle—but you shall not—you have the brightest eyes of all our maidens—you shall not dim them by following a nasty needle; and on such a day as this—look how lovely the world is all around us—it were a shame to go within doors on the fairest day of all the year. Stay with me, Phillis.

Phillis (*digging up a tiny flower with the toe of her shoe*). If—you—truly—wish—it,—I—will—stay—with—you.

(*There is an embarrassed pause for some minutes.*)

Corydon. How bright your hair shines in the sunshine, Phillis. It is as bright as gold.

Phillis. I am so happy if you think it pretty.

Corydon. It lies in such sweet, soft curls where it meets your throat—your white, slender throat. Nothing could be fairer.

(The destruction of the tiny flower proceeds rapidly. There is a silence for some seconds.)

Corydon. Phillis!

Phillis. Yes, dear Corydon.

Corydon. The last time I was in the market-place yonder, there was a booth where rings were sold—and pins—and necklaces.

Phillis. I know it well—there are beautiful things sold there.

Corydon. They sell there the prettiest necklaces—made of some sea-flower—scarlet in colour—they call it coral. The clasp is a tiny true lover's knot of gold.

Phillis. I have seen them, dear.

Corydon. I am sure one of them would look beautiful in contrast with the whiteness of your throat—were it clasped round it. *(The tiny flower is by now crushed out of all knowledge.)* Would you be very angry, Phillis, were I to bring you one?

Phillis. Angry? Oh! Corydon.

Corydon. Then I may? *(She nods her head almost imperceptibly.)* And when you wear it—will you sometimes think of your poor Corydon?

Phillis. I—shall—not—need—that—to—make—me—
think—of—him. (*A pause.*) Corydon, you did
never love poor Perdita—who is dead?

Corydon. I love Perdita! No, no, she was to have wed
my brother—and would have—but she died.
Surely you knew of it.

Phillis. I had heard of it, but I did not know for sure
—and she gave you an ewe-lamb before she
died. I am glad she was not your love because
—because—

Corydon. Why, Phillis, dear?

Phillis. Because—because—why—because she is dead
and you would have grieved.

Corydon (disappointedly). Oh!

*(There is another interval of silence, and a
second flower is trampled like the first.)*

Corydon. What of the lovers? I had quite forgot
them.

Phillis. There they sit unchanged. Corydon, I think
we wronged them. It is no harm to us if they
are happy.

Corydon. It is no harm to us indeed.

Phillis. It was unkind of us to laugh because he put
his arm around her waist.

Corydon. It was indeed unkind, and I am sorry
for it.

Phillis. They may find comfort in it.

Corydon. I think it very likely, dear one.

(A pause, in which they move closer to each other.)

Phillis. I—wonder—if—it—be—indeed—so—pleasant—after all.

Corydon. We—we—might—there might—there would be surely little harm in trying.

Phillis (looking down). 'Tis very true.

(He puts his arm round her waist in a tentative and embarrassed manner.)

Corydon. What think you—*Phillis* dear—may it stay there?

Phillis. I—think—I—like—it.

Corydon (sadly). Only think you like it?

Phillis. Dear—I am sure of it; and you?

Corydon. I did not think there was such happiness in all the world. *(Suddenly and anxiously.)*

Phillis—do you like it because it is I—or would another's arm please you as well.

Phillis. Oh, cruel—cruel *Corydon*; to doubt me thus!
(Weeps.)

Corydon (desperately). Oh! I am a villain! Oh! I have killed her with my brutishness! *Phillis* dearest—dearest, dearest *Phillis*! Look up! Oh! be not angry with your *Corydon*!

Phillis. Oh! unkind—unkind!

Corydon. Dearest heart—forgive me!

(She looks up and smiles at him. He kisses her.)

Phillis. Corydon! You have kissed me!!

Corydon. Forgive me, dearest, I am very sorry. It was not I that kissed you—it was some power within me.

Phillis. What, it was not you?—You did not kiss me willingly? *(Weeps.)*

Corydon (with the calmness of despair). Truly I am a villain, and should be hanged for treating her thus cruelly.

Phillis No, no, you are not, dear Corydon. *(A short pause.)* Dearest, did it seem foolish to you—or unpleasant—or to be reprehended?

Corydon. How can you say such cruel words to me?

Phillis. Thus it was we spoke of Strephon and of Daphne.

Corydon. Why, so we did, but that seems years ago.

Phillis. We were the fools, and they it was who were wise. Alas! How much time have we not wasted.

Corydon. Indeed, I think it must be so—only—only—

Phillis. What, dearest heart?

Corydon. What is it that has made us think so differently about it?

Phillis. I cannot tell. Strange, there must be a reason, though what it is I know not. (*They stand a little apart, both knitting their brows in thought. Suddenly an idea strikes both of them.*) Corydon!

Corydon. Phillis!

Together. I think—

Phillis. Nay, I am sure.

Corydon. Most certain of it.

Phillis. What is it, Corydon?

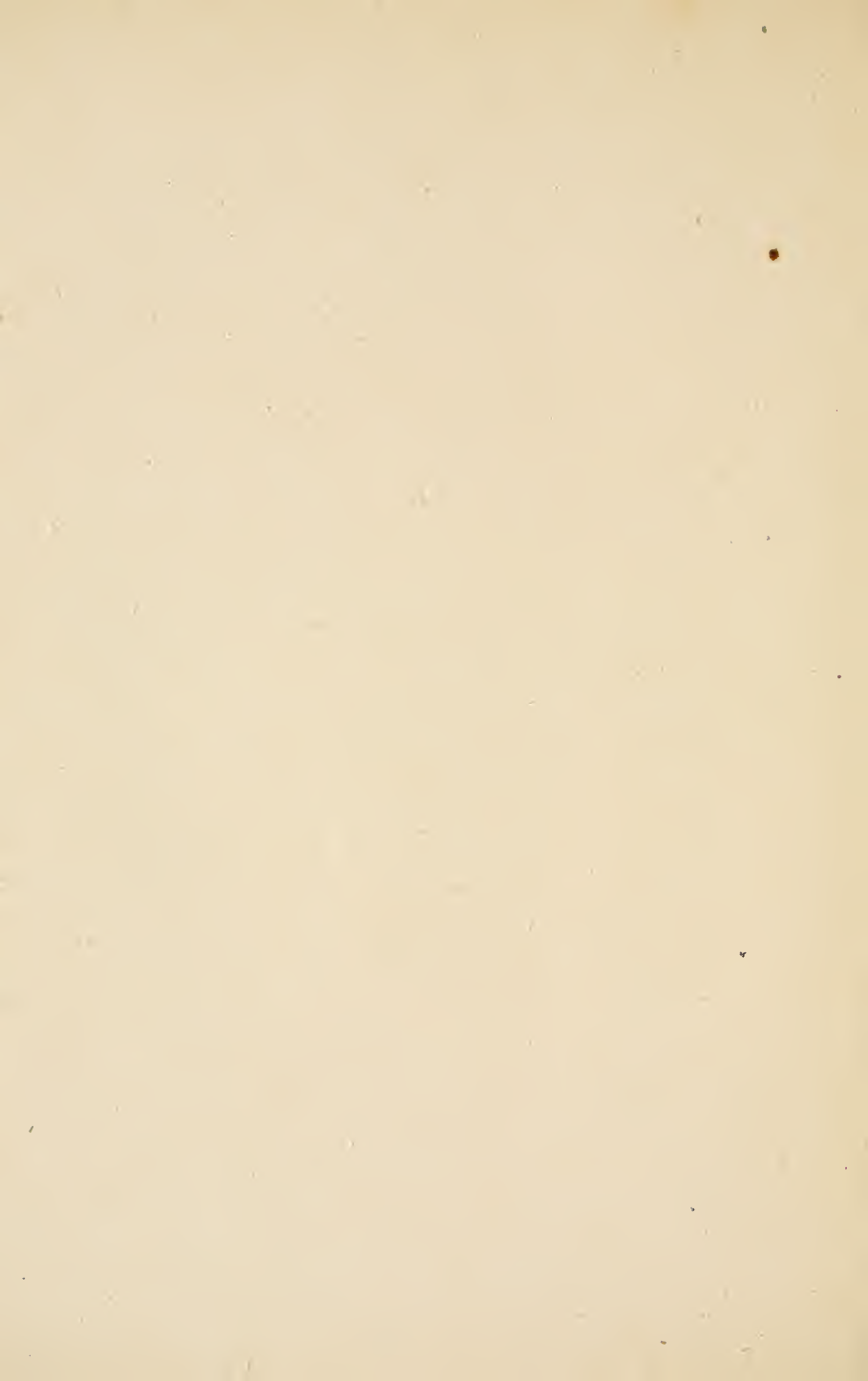
Corydon. What is it, dearest Phillis?

Together. Darling, we love each other.

C U R T A I N .

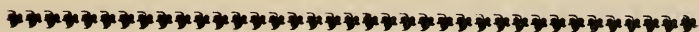
THE THIRD OF THE
PLAYS, CALLED
THE FOUNTAIN OF
HONOUR





THE FOUNTAIN OF HONOUR

Scene—An office near Charing Cross. *Time*—The Present



C H A R A C T E R S

Miss Barrington.

A Money-lender.

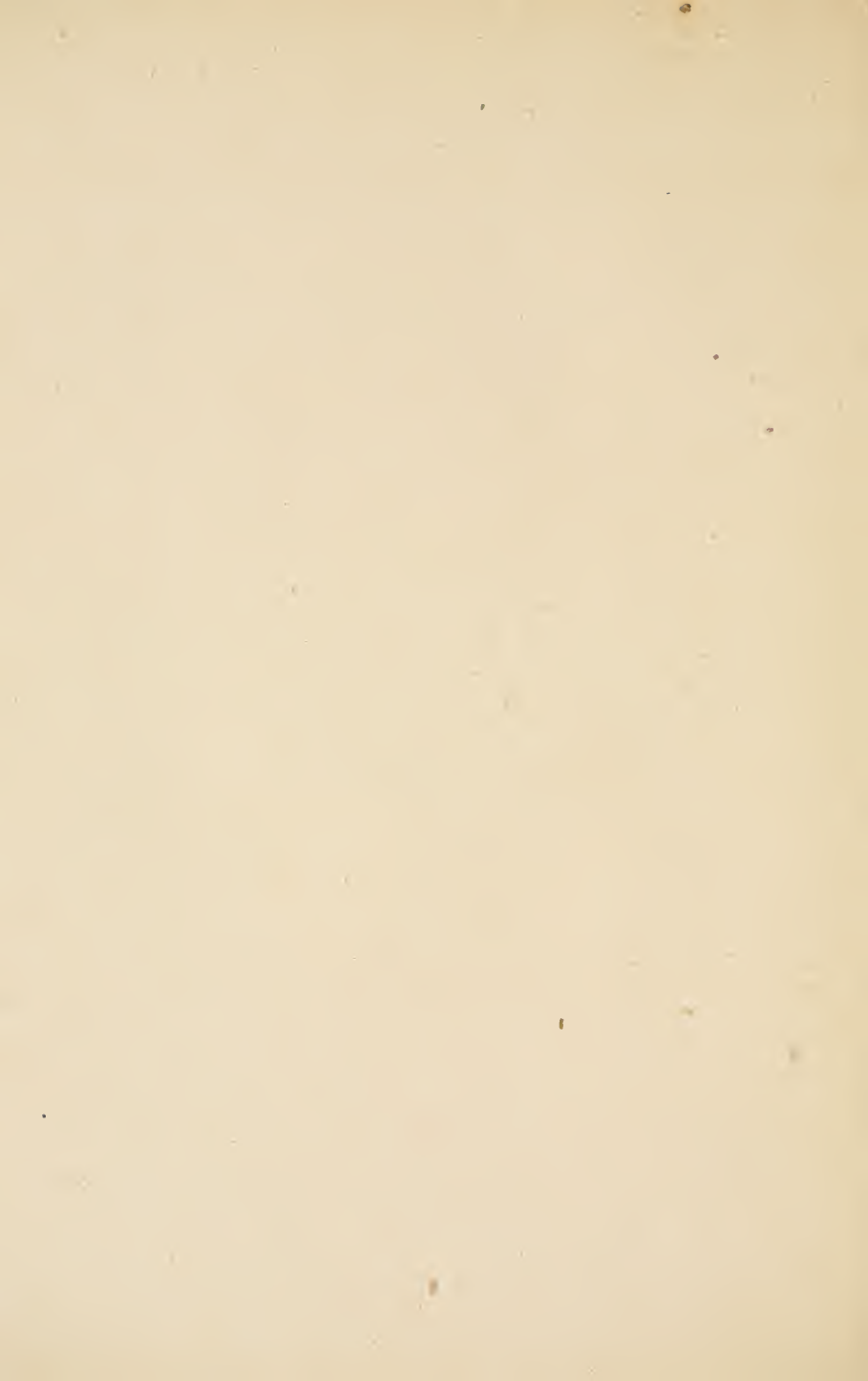
His Clerk.

A Clergyman.

A Curate.

Love.





THE FOUNTAIN OF HONOUR

✦ *SCENE.*—The private room of a money-lender's office in the neighbourhood of Charing Cross. It is furnished in an ostentatiously luxurious manner, with gorgeously upholstered easy chairs, settees, &c. There are several large and execrable oil-paintings hanging on the walls. The floor is covered with a thick, vividly-patterned Turkey carpet. On the left is a door leading into the public office beyond. At the back, in centre, is a marble mantelpiece, covered with ormolu clocks, vases, &c. In the grate a bright fire is burning. On one side of the fireplace is visible the front of a large safe let into the thickness of the wall behind. On the other side is an alcove, in which stands a dumb-waiter, with decanters of whisky, bottles of champagne, cigar boxes, glasses, &c., &c. On the right are two tall windows, heavily curtained. Wherever there is a vacant space against the walls are piles of japanned tin deed-boxes, having either letters or dates painted upon their faces in white.

✦ In the centre of the room is a large writing desk, littered over with papers. It is so placed that the person writing at it sits with his back to the light and opposite the door. Placed in front of it is a chair for clients.

* *The Clerk is standing at the desk, arranging papers, &c., as the curtain rises. He is a middle-aged man, with a hard-featured, but not unpleasant, face. He is evidently much amused at the contents of one of the letters before him, and mutters to himself.*

The Clerk (chuckling). Lord! But he's a deep one. I don't believe there's a deeper one, not—in—in Hell itself.

(The Money-lender enters. He is comparatively a young man, not more than thirty at the outside. The chief noticeable feature of his face is the eyes, which are unusually dark and bright, and closely set to the nose. He is well, but not over-dressed, and wears a magnificent sable-lined overcoat, which he throws aside upon a chair. He is in high good humour, chuckling audibly, and smacking his hands together.)

The Money-lender. I've got him, Jasper—I've got him!

The Clerk. Well done, sir, well done—but I knew you would.

The Money-lender. Give me a drink, Jasper—and take one yourself. My word—but it's worth a

whiskey and soda—got him right out of old Isaac's hands—under his very nose, too—and all for the price of a fifteen-shilling lunch.

The Clerk. I suppose there's no fear of Mr. Isaac's getting at him again, now you're out of the way, sir?

The Money-lender. Not the slightest, Jasper—not the very slightest. It's all signed, sealed and delivered, signed, sealed and delivered. Only twenty-one, two days ago.

The Clerk (absently). Poor young devil!

The Money-lender (with a half-sigh). Poor young devil indeed. (*Sternly.*) What do you mean, Jasper? I won't have it, I tell you.

The Clerk. Beg your pardon, sir, I'm sure. It kind of slipped out of me.

The Money-lender. Nonsense, man, it's quite true. He is a poor young devil, and what's more I'm a blackguard. Aren't I, Jasper?

The Clerk. You've been a good friend to me, sir.

The Money-lender. Don't be ridiculous, man. Your ugly face is worth double what I give you to anyone in my line.

The Clerk. You lifted me out of the gutter, sir, knowing what you did about me—and any man that speaks against you in my hearing—(*with*

rising excitement)—he'd better look out for himself—that's all.

The Money-lender. You'd make a great hit in the Salvation Army, Jasper. Let's see—you were something in that line—weren't you—before?

The Clerk. I was second footman in the Bishop of Watford's family, before I took to stealing. He never gave me a second chance—you did, sir.

The Money-lender. A fellow-feeling, you know, Jasper. For that matter I pulled myself out of the gutter—though it wasn't my own fault that I was there.

The Clerk. That I'll swear it wasn't, sir.

The Money-lender (musingly). You wouldn't think of me as given to falling in love, would you, Jasper?

Jasper (chuckling). Not exactly, sir.

The Money-lender. Yet it was being in love that brought me to what I am now. (*A pause.*) I was a clerk in a stock-broker's office then. She was his daughter. I don't believe there ever was anybody so much in love as I was. I got chucked out of the office for it—that was all it was worth to me. She told her father I had insulted her, and he gave me ten minutes to get out.

The Clerk. What a young devil, sir!

The Money-lender. So she was, Jasper, I swear she was. But I'll get my own back yet; in spite of them all.

The Clerk. Don't say you would run the risk of another refusal, sir.

The Money-lender. Not much, Jasper—I mean to keep to cub-hunting, now. They've got to make it up to me—poor wretches. (*A pause.*) She wouldn't be much of a catch now—for that matter—if one cared for that. The old man—Barrington was his name—of Barrington & Churchill—

The Clerk. Who was found out, sir, just before they made him Lord Mayor, and blew his brains out on the Mansion House steps?

The Money-lender. That's the man, Jasper. He left a million and a quarter of debts behind him, and ruined—why, he ruined almost as many people as I have.

The Clerk (rubbing his hands). He was a deep one, sir—or he would have been if he hadn't been found out. What became of the daughter, sir?

The Money-lender. I never heard. I expect she came to know what being hungry meant, as I did.

(There is the sound of a bell in the outer office. The Clerk goes out, while the Money-lender busies himself over his letters. The Clerk returns with a card, which he gives to the Money-lender, who looks at it.)

The Money-lender. Another clergyman! Upon my word, I'd better start a Depot of the Bible Society here at once. No wonder they have Distressed Curates' Funds. Show him in, Jasper, show him in. *(The Clerk exits and returns followed by a middle-aged clergyman. He has a bucolic and naturally rather jolly face, with prominent blue eyes and short white side-whiskers. At present he has a doubtful and worried expression, and is evidently extremely nervous.)* Come in, Mr. Pettigrew, come in, sir. You need not wait, Jasper.

(Exit the Clerk.)

The Clergyman. I—I—er—am afraid—er—I am intruding upon your valuable—er—time. *(Turning hastily towards the door.)* I will call in some other time.

The Money-lender. Not at all, my dear sir, not at all. I am quite at your disposition. Sit down, I beg of you. Let me take your hat and umbrella. *(He forces the Clergyman into the chair, taking*

his hat and umbrella from him. The Clergyman looks after them feebly.) And now, Mr. Pettigrew, what can I have the pleasure of doing for you this morning?

The Clergyman. Well, sir, the fact is—I er—I am a little out of breath. (*Looking round him curiously.*) I imagine you do not have many clergymen calling upon you.

The Money-lender. On the contrary—I am thankful to say I have a large and increasing clerical connection. I, in fact, cultivate it. I have always preferred to do business with men of known probity and honour.

The Clergyman. You surprise me! I should never have thought it. I imagine they are chiefly the unbeneficed clergy.

The Money-lender (smiling). Not at all, sir. My clientèle ranges from Bishops, Deans, Archdeacons, Canons, through all the ramifications of Incumbents down to the last new curate who was ordained the day before yesterday. I could show you letters (*waving his hand towards the deed-boxes*) from every one of them.

The Clergyman. Extraordinary!

The Money-lender. Perfectly natural, my dear sir. It is not for me to tell you how shamefully the

incomes of the clergy are decreasing. Why, sir, I know of a benefice that used to be worth £600 a year, which is now not worth £200. Your own parish of Haddington-cum-Stockton-Parva—

The Clergyman. Bless my soul! How did you know that?

The Money-lender. I can assure you that the fame of your sermons has penetrated far beyond the borders of Rutlandshire. (*He carelessly draws some papers over a "Clergy List" which he has been studying. The Clergyman bows and blushes.*) As I was saying, even your own living has deteriorated some $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. in the last twenty years.

The Clergyman. Unfortunately, such is the case.

The Money-lender. At the same time the calls upon the pockets of the clergy have increased rather than diminished. Well, sir, I know of many instances where a clergyman has some pressing need of money for some good purpose. He has but a small income. He lives in a poor parish. What does he do? If he be foolish he leaves the good work undone. If, on the other hand, he be well advised, he borrows the money from some one who, conscious

that he is furthering a good work, is prepared to take a small interest, and at the same time not be too harsh as regards the immediate repayment of the principal. You follow me, sir ?

The Clergyman. I do, most thankfully. What you have said tallies in every particular with what I have heard of you. It is, in fact, on such an errand I have called to see you to-day.

The Money-lender. I trust, sincerely, that I may be able to be of service to you.

The Clergyman. I must tell you that at Haddington we have a very beautiful church with one of the finest Perpendicular towers in the country. This tower has, however, been allowed to fall into a disgraceful state of dis-repair, and I have for some time been determined that it must be restored.

The Money-lender. A very laudable determination indeed.

The Clergyman. My income is but a small one, and of rich people my parish contains absolutely none. The savings of many years are insufficient to do more than begin the work, and for a time it seemed impossible. One day, however, there came into my

thoughts the name of a lady I had known in earlier years who used to take great interest in such matters. I determined before finally giving up my project to appeal to her for help. I accordingly looked up her address in London, and preferring to make my application personally rather than by letter, packed up a carpet-bag, and came to town by the afternoon express yesterday.

The Money-lender. I trust your errand met with success.

The Clergyman. I will tell you, sir. At the Station Hotel, where I put up, it happened that I sat next, at the table d'hôte, to a most charming and gentlemanly person, one Captain de Vere.

The Money-lender. De Vere, de Vere—I seem to know the name.

The Clergyman. A most charming person, I assure you, and, for a military man, remarkably well-read. It so happened that I mentioned to him the matter of which my thoughts were full. He sympathised with me at once, and—in this I firmly believe the finger of Providence made itself manifest—he mentioned your name, assuring me that you were a true Christian, of whom he had heard nothing but good, and

with whom several of his friends had had dealings, always of a most satisfactory nature. He considered it beyond question, he said, that you would abate even your usual easy terms were you to advance money towards the prosecution of so good a work. He spoke so earnestly and altogether impressed me so favourably, that in the end I determined to take his advice and to call upon you before troubling a lady, who, however wealthy, has, no doubt, many and pressing appeals which ought to rank before mine.

The Money-lender. What is the amount which would be required ?

The Clergyman. The whole cost would be approximately £400, towards which I have saved up some £150—I therefore require at least £250, which is perhaps a larger sum than you would care to advance. (*The Money-lender takes pen and paper and begins to figure with them.*) There is one thing more, sir, which I wish to say to you. I am, as you see, a man knowing little of the world. Of you I know nothing, beyond what I have been told by a chance acquaintance. I come here and place myself unreservedly in your hands, trusting you are

an honourable man; but, sir, I am not so innocent as to be unaware that there are men, calling themselves money-lenders, whose whole energies are given to the ruining of those who are foolish enough to have dealings with them. If, sir—I mean no offence—if, sir, I say, you are one of those men, I beg that you will pause and reflect that the profit you will make out of any dealings you may have with me is but inconsiderable when weighed against the ruin of an old and harmless man who thus throws himself upon your mercy. (*The Money-lender makes a motion as if he would speak, were it not that he is overcome by emotion.*) I have hurt your feelings, sir. Forgive me—I might have seen from your face (for I pride myself on being a judge of character) that you are very different to those usurers against whom I have read so many warnings.

The Money-lender. I beg, Mr. Pettigrew, that you will not apologise. For a moment, I admit that I was grieved—not that you should have doubted my *bona-fides*—but that there are men in the profession, as is only too true, who by their conduct deserve the strictures you have

passed upon them. Yet, Mr. Pettigrew, did you consider the temptation to extortion and evil-dealing which is daily placed in their way, you would feel compassion even for them. I pray to God that I may never come to be as one of them—but oh! sir, did you know the temptations to which I am daily—nay, hourly—subject, you would know how much I need your prayers and those of all good men.

(He buries his face in his hands and appears to weep.)

The Clergyman. Sir, you are a good man and I see how bitterly I have wronged you. Do not doubt that your prayers will be answered.

The Money-lender. I trust so—I trust so. I wish that I could prove my sincerity to you by giving you a cheque for the full amount you need as a free donation; but, alas! for all you may think to the contrary, I am anything but a rich man. The very furniture you see is not my own—only hired. The money, by the lending of which I make my living, is not even mine. Come, Mr. Pettigrew, I will let you into a secret. I have a friend in the City who advances me what money I require at 5 per cent. This money I advance to my clients at 15 per cent.,

the difference being my own. The advertisements of "Money lent at 5 per cent." are invariably fraudulent, I may tell you. Well, sir, I will lend you, say, £200 at 10 per cent. interest. This will cost you £20. If you think this too much, I beg that you will not think of accepting it. In any case, I warn you quite openly that £10 of it will go into my pocket. I say this to show you that I treat it strictly as a business transaction. In these matters the proffer of friendship means the certainty of fraud.

The Clergyman. Sir, you are an honest man—I thank you warmly. The £20 will indeed be a considerable deduction from my annual stipend, but it is my Master's work, and I accept with gratitude. It was indeed His guidance that led me here.

The Money-lender (smiling cordially). I think, Mr. Pettigrew, that you will not find me unduly harsh in my treatment of you. (*He rings a hand-bell. Enter the Clerk.*) Bring me in one of the usual forms, made out to 10 per cent.

(*The Clerk exits and returns with a blue paper.*)

The Clergyman. You have not yet told me what

security you will require. I fear I have little to offer.

The Money-lender. My dear Mr. Pettigrew, I also am something of a judge of character. I shall only ask you to sign the usual promise to repay, and in the course of a day or two you will receive a cheque. You sign here. (*He hands the Clergyman a pen, who signs in the place shown him. The Money-lender quickly picks the paper up before he has time to look at it.*) Thank you—that is quite right. Jasper, fill in the particulars—10 per cent., remember—not the usual 15 per cent.—this is for a charity, Jasper. Now, sir (*turning to the Clergyman*) I will no longer detain you. I am sure you must be longing to give directions to your architect.

The Clergyman. Upon my word, you read my thoughts like a magician. I was just thinking of it. Good day, sir, good day, and God bless you!

The Money-lender. Good day, sir, good day. Jasper, show Mr. Pettigrew the door. (*Exeunt the Clergyman and the Clerk. The Money-lender leans back in his chair and smiles at the ceiling.*) What fools these parsons be! Never read a word of it—not that he would have seen much if he had.

(Re-enter the Clerk.)

The Clerk. Ten per cent. a month, sir, I suppose?

The Money-lender. Yes—as usual. Just get Simmons to look him up a little, and let me have the report as soon as it comes—though I know the fellow's all right. By the way, send Lawkins—Captain de Vere, you know—his commission; that man's worth his weight in gold.

The Clerk (enthusiastically). He's a deep one, sir, is Lawkins. *(Another ring at the outer office. Exit the Clerk. He returns almost immediately.)* It's Mr. Tancred, sir.

The Money-lender. Ha, ha!—the other side of the picture. Well, has he brought his money?

The Clerk. No, sir, he hasn't—but he says he must see you.

The Money-lender. I won't see him. Tell him to go to the Devil. Tell him if he doesn't pay up to-morrow he'll know it.

(Exit the Clerk. There is heard the sound of an altercation outside. In a little the door bursts open suddenly and he re-enters struggling with a young clergyman.)

The Curate. I will see him—I insist upon it. *(Seeing the Money-lender.)* Ah! there you are, sir.

What is the meaning of this? A demand for another £40—payable to-day—what does it mean?

The Money-lender (calmly). It means you've got to pay it.

The Curate. Pay it! I will not pay it! For a loan of £200 I have already paid you back £240 of interest alone—leaving the principal untouched, and now you claim another £40. I refuse to pay.

The Money-lender. You dog! You swindling cur! Get out of this office! How dare you come here to brow-beat me? Get out, I say! If you prefer being shown up—don't pay. I warrant I'll find means to make you—you thief!

The Curate. I'll write to the "Times" about it—I'll warn people against you. I'll have you imprisoned—I will not pay.

The Money-lender. Write by all means, swindler—and see who will come out of it best—the money-lender—or the rogue of a parson that has dealings with him.

The Curate. How dare you! How—how—

The Money-lender. And who steals his mother's trust-money to pay the interest with. Get out, I say!

The Curate. Wha—what do you mean?

The Money-lender. You know well enough—you—
you pillar of religion. Go on—write to the
“Times” by all means.

The Curate. I will try to get the money together—if
you will allow me a few days to look round me.

The Money-lender. Ah, ha! You change your note,
do you? It won't do. I'm sick of you and
your whining. Pay—you damned sweep—and
look pleasant. If the money is not here by to-
morrow you know what to expect.

The Curate. But I haven't got it.

The Money-lender. Take it out of the plate at church
—or steal some more from your mother—I don't
mind. Come, don't try any more blustering.
Jasper, go for a policeman and tell him there's
a drunken man disguised as a parson who
won't leave the premises.

The Curate (aside). There is no help for it—I must
take some more. Oh! God, what have I done
to deserve this?

(Exit, followed by the Clerk.)

The Money-lender (with a thoughtful smile). My
dear friend Pettigrew, have you any trust-
funds—I wonder?

(A ring at the outer bell. Re-enter the Clerk.)

The Clerk. Please, sir, there's a lady wants to see you
—at least I think she's a lady though she's
poorly dressed.

The Money-lender. Hum—doesn't sound promising.

The Clerk. She's very anxious to see you, sir, and
made me promise I'd do my best with you.

The Money-lender. Very well—show her in. By the
bye, I hope she didn't see that fellow Tancred—
it doesn't do to begin with a bad impression.

The Clerk. He went quiet enough, sir. I think he will
cut his throat.

The Money-lender. Not he—not until his mother's
money's finished any way. He may then—for
all I care.

The Clerk (rubbing his hands enthusiastically). He!
he!—that's how you know them.

(Exits and returns, followed by Miss Barrington and Love, who is invisible. Love goes over to the fire-place and stands beside it. Miss Barrington stops in front of the desk. Exit the Clerk.)

The Money-lender. What can I have the—*(suddenly recognising her)*. Good Lord—Miss Barrington!
(aside). At last! *(aloud)*. Miss Barrington,
this is an honour. I'm so glad to see you.
Do sit down. Well—how do you do? Why,

it's years since I saw you. How well you are looking! How is dear Mrs. Barrington—and your father—how has he been all this long time?

Miss Barrington. My father is dead, Mr. Weale.

The Money-lender. Dead! God bless my soul—dead!

Why, when I last saw him he was looking the picture of health. He looked as if he might have lived to be a hundred—and now he is dead. Was it a long illness, Miss Barrington?

Miss Barrington. My father committed suicide, Mr. Weale.

The Money-lender. Suicide! Dear—dear—how very shocking. But now I think of it—he always did work too hard. It must tell on a man's brain to work as he did. Ah me! A man has to pay for being a millionaire.

Miss Barrington. He died a bankrupt.

The Money-lender. You amaze me!

Miss Barrington. He left my mother and myself without a penny. Mr. Weale, that is why I have come to you. Oh! You must know how cruel is the want that drives me to that. We have been slowly starving for two years. We have not a penny in the world. My dear mother—she is old now—she cannot work. Oh! If you knew how patient she is—how uncomplaining.

I have tried to work for us both, but what can I do? I was brought up to be good-for-nothing, and I have not a friend left in the world. Mr. Weale, my mother is dying—of want,—within a stone's-throw of this office she is dying in a filthy garret. I had heard that you were in business somewhere near here, and I saw your name upon the door-post as I passed. I have come to ask you—in memory of old times—to give me a few shillings, that I may get her a few comforts, and perhaps save her life. Oh! if you knew what it costs me to ask it of you, you would pity me.

The Money-lender (coldly). Do you think it is wise to remind me of what is past when you come to ask me for charity?

Miss Barrington. That means that you will not. I at least thank you for being so straightforward.

(She turns to leave the room.)

The Money-lender. A moment, Miss Barrington. As you say, I will not give you the money—but listen to me. I am a rich man now—I can afford to spend a little on my own gratification. You may not know it, but I have become a money-lender—an unpopular profession, but not an unprofitable one.

Miss Barrington. Oh! Mr. Weale, I will repay it—I will indeed. Ask any terms you like, and I swear I will repay you—if I work my fingers to the bone to do it.

The Money-lender. And—the security?

Miss Barrington. You ask a beggar for security? Is not my word enough? Can you not trust me?

The Money-lender. A moment, Miss Barrington. I have a proposition to make to you. If you remember, some years back I made a certain proposal to you.

Miss Barrington. And I refused you.

The Money-lender. I will lend you any money you may require on one condition.

Miss Barrington. What is that?

The Money-lender. I wish to repeat that proposition and I require you to accept it—with one slight proviso.

Miss Barrington. That is?

The Money-lender. That having, as I say, become a money-lender, I have grown greedy of money and I feel that I (*looking her straight in the face suddenly*) cannot afford the expense of a wedding-ring.

Miss Barrington. You cannot afford the cost of a

wedding-ring! You cannot afford—why, you are trifling with me. Why—what do you mean? What do you mean? My God! and have I laid myself open to this? Am I dreaming? You—you cur!

(Exits furiously from the room.)

The Money-lender. God, what a handsome girl she is. *(Thoughtfully.)* Now I wonder if I haven't carried this a little too far. I wonder if I wasn't a little too much of a blackguard to start with.

Love (from where he stands beside the fireplace). You were, William Weale—and, more than that, you were a fool. You knew all the time that at the bottom of your heart you love her—and yet you could treat her as you did. Before there was a chance that you might have gained her love. What does she think of you now?

The Money-lender. You lie, you hound! I hate her! I hate her from the bottom of my soul. Ha, ha! She will come back—she must—she can't help herself—and then—every one of her sneers—every one of her father's brutalities; by God, but she shall pay them in full.

Love. Pah! You are more of a blackguard even than a fool.

The Money-lender. You devil, how dare you? Where are you hiding? Come out! Jasper! Jasper!!
(*Enter the Clerk hurriedly.*) Turn this man out. How did he get in? Turn him out at once!

The Clerk. Man! What man, sir?

The Money-lender (*looking round him vaguely*). There—that—why—am I going mad? Isn't there someone in the room?

The Clerk. Not since the lady went out, sir.

The Money-lender. Give me a whiskey-and-soda. I believe I'm going off my onion. Quickly, now! (*The Clerk fetches it. He drinks it off at a draught.*) That's better. I could have sworn there was a fellow in the room black-guarding me no end. Do you believe in conscience?

The Clerk. Can't say that I do, sir.

The Money-lender. Well, either I'm developing one, or I've been working too hard. That will do, Jasper. I won't see anybody that calls.

(*Exit the Clerk. He returns a moment later.*)

The Clerk. Beg pardon, sir, but the young lady—she's come back.

The Money-lender. Show her in by all means. (*Exit*

the Clerk.) Ha, ha! Mr. Conscience, who was right—you or I?

(Enter Miss Barrington in great distress.)

Miss Barrington. They are turning my mother into the street—dying as she is—into the rain—they are seizing the very bed she lies upon. Give me the money—at least I can save her that.

The Money-lender. I thought you would. How much do you want?

Miss Barrington. About £4, not more.

The Money-lender (ringing). Jasper! *(Enter the Clerk.)*
Get £250 out of the safe—in notes—or—
No. You will want some small change. £245 in notes, £4 10s. gold, and the rest silver.
(The Clerk goes to the safe and opens it.)
Won't you sit down, Miss Barrington, while he is getting it?

Miss Barrington. I do not want so much. I will not take it from you. I—

The Money-lender. You will take that or nothing—or nothing, Miss Barrington. When I buy a thing I always make a point of paying a fair price for it. *(The Clerk comes forward with the money.)* Here it is. One hundred—one-fifty—two hundred—two-twenty-five, two-forty-five. One—two—three—four sovereigns—ten

shillings and one, three, five, seven-and-six, ten shillings—two hundred and fifty. Take it. You see that I trust you to return when you have attended to your more immediate business.

Miss Barrington. I will come back.

(Exit.)

The Clerk. But, sir—she never signed nothing.

The Money-lender. Thank you, Jasper, I know my own business best. You need not wait. *(Exit the Clerk. The Money-lender goes and sits down in front of the fire, and sets about stirring it up with the poker.)* I think it was worth waiting all these years. I rather think it was worth waiting for.

Love. There was a time, William Weale, when the thought of what you are now would have filled you with horror.

The Money-lender. There again, old man? That's all right. I rather thought her coming back would have knocked you out. *(To himself.)* I'm certainly going dotty.

Love. I can remember the time, William Weale, when you used to pray every night upon your knees that you might be allowed to ward off evil from this girl. Reflect a little. Even now it is not too late.

The Money-lender. Hold your tongue!

Love. I can do more. I can see into the future. I can see the misery that you are bringing upon yourself—not to speak of her. I can see you, like a damned soul, wandering about the world, praying that the guilt may be lifted from off you—and it will not be.

The Money-lender. I don't know about my being a damned soul, but I'm sure you're a damned nuisance. Why can't you leave me alone? I tell you I've waited five years for my revenge, and now I'm going to have it.

Love. Poor fool! can you not see that your revenge will recoil upon your own head? It always does. Think! Is it even the revenge that you have wished for? She was to see your good qualities—(*contemptuously*) your good qualities—and to love you, and to plead in vain for yours in return. This is a pretty realisation of it.

The Money-lender. You may grumble, my friend, but it is revenge—although (*crushing a piece of coal with the tongs*) I admit the other might have been more satisfactory—but still (*clanking the tongs against the top rail of the grate*) one can't have everything in this world.

Love. Do you remember the dreams you used to have?

five years ago, of what your married life would be—of how dearly you would return each other's love—of your children? Do you remember those dreams?

The Money-lender (dropping the poker and sitting up convulsively). Come now—stop it! Play fair!

Love. Do you remember how you used to long—you were little more than a boy then—how somebody might insult her—or do her some slight injury—that you might prove the extent of your love upon their bodies?

The Money-lender. Damn it all—you must admit that I was very badly treated.

Love. Do you remember one evening—you had dined at her father's house for the first time—do you remember?—*I do*—how you stopped under the light of a lamp-post—and took out a flower that she had been wearing and swore that whatever happened—

The Money-lender (rising suddenly with the poker in his hand, held swordwise). Look here, don't make me out a bigger fool than I was. (*He pauses for a moment as if thinking deeply, then says suddenly:*) Here, I give in. What do you want me to do? Shall I offer to marry her?

Love. Do you think she would marry you? She looks

upon you as a wild beast. She is sacrificing herself to you to save her mother.

The Money-lender. That's enough. Don't hit a man when he is down. What do you want me to do?

Love. When she comes back you must refuse to see her.

The Money-lender. For God's sake, let me have a drink. (*He drinks some neat whiskey from the decanter.*) Well—if I do—what becomes of my £250?

Love. Isn't your love for her worth £250?

The Money-lender. I don't love her at all.

Love. You do.

The Money-lender (wearily). Well—well—have it your own way. Suppose I do. What about my money?

Love. She will refuse to keep it. You must refuse to take it back.

The Money-lender. What sort of a fool do you take me for?

Love. She will be coming back shortly. Go! Write out a receipt for it in full.

The Money-lender. I'll do nothing of the kind.

Love. Do you remember—

The Money-lender. Yes—yes—all right—for God's

sake hold your tongue. Look here—I haven't got a receipt stamp. I'll do it to-morrow and send it her.

Love. You have stamped receipt-forms in the top drawer of your desk. Do it.

(The Money-lender goes unwillingly to his desk, takes out a paper and proceeds to write on it. As he does so, Love stands over him and whispers to him. A look of relief comes over his face as he puts out his hand to touch the bell.)

The Money-lender *(in a low voice).* Thank God! *(The sound of the bell in the outer office is heard. He rushes to the door.)* Jasper! Jasper!! *(The Clerk appears in the doorway.)* Here—take this—quickly. Give it to her—tell her to go away. Tell her it was all a mistake. Ask her to forgive me. Ask her—Jasper!!

The Clerk. Yes, sir.

The Money-lender. Tell her—tell her— Oh! Go to the Devil!!

(He slams the door in Jasper's face—locks it—and throws himself on his face on the floor as the curtain falls.)

C U R T A I N .

THE FOURTH OF
THE PLAYS, CALLED
A LOVE-MATCH

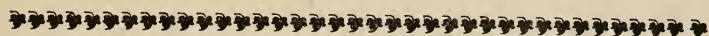




A LOVE = MATCH.

Scene.—The Churchyard of a Gloucestershire Village.

Time.—The early part of the Nineteenth Century.



C H A R A C T E R S .

An Old Woman, Mary Pollock, Robin Lurcher,

William Ranger, Thomas Oughton, *Villagers.*

Children, Villagers, &c.

Old Grimes, *a Sexton.*

Parson Brabazon.

The Husband.

The Wife.

Love.



A LOVE = MATCH.

✱ *SCENE.*—An old, overgrown churchyard, thickly dotted over with weathered, and in many cases overthrown, gravestones. On the left is the Lych-gate, of grey, carved oak, with a high-pitched, brown-tiled roof. The right of the stage and about three-quarters of the back are closed in with the grey, ivy-clad walls and crumbling porch of the church. The right of the church is shaded by a large yew-tree, beneath which is a rustic seat. Between the church and the churchyard wall is a space of grave-dotted, high grass. In the distance, behind this, can be seen part of the Parsonage, with a gate opening into the churchyard. The wall is lined with pollarded elms, in full leaf. Between and over them can be seen the roofs of an inconsiderable village. Close under the wall of the church is a new grave, the brown earth, as yet not overgrown, standing out in sharp contrast to the green grass all around it. It is of small size, as the grave of a child, and on it lie simple home-made wreaths and small bunches of wild flowers, already withering in the heat of the sunshine.

✱ The village school has just been dismissed, and the children are playing hide-and-seek among the gravestones, picking the daisies, or singing. Old Grimes, the

sexton, suddenly rushes out of the porch and begins driving them away. He is a little, withered, old man, dressed in rusty black. He is clean-shaved, but has unusually long white hair.



Old Grimes. Drat ye! Must ye turn my churchyard into a romping ground, and your little play-mate not two hours buried? Go away—go home with you!

A Child. Mary wouldn't mind our playing round where she's buried.

Old Grimes. Come now—no back talk! Out of my churchyard! Off with you!

Another Child. Parson told us Mary was in Heaven.

Old Grimes. Never you mind what Parson told you. This is my churchyard, and I won't have no children playing in it.

(After much exertion he succeeds in driving them out of the Lych-gate. He then sits down, panting, on an overturned tombstone, and mops his forehead with a red bandana handkerchief.)

Old Grimes. Sakes alive! It's well for the poor little mite that she is in Heaven. It's little she

had to look for in this world, with her poor father driven out of house and home as it were, and never a soul to say a good word for him but me.

(An old woman enters in a great state of excitement.)

The Old Woman. Law! Mister Grimes—you'd never believe it—not if I told you ever so.

Old Grimes. If that's the case I wouldn't waste my breath in the telling of it if I were you.

The Old Woman. Eh! But tell you I will. All the village is a-clack with it.

Old Grimes. Well, what is it then? Another ghost in Farmer Westall's barn? or has Parson's old sow had another litter of pigs?

The Old Woman. Nay, nay—it's nothing of that. It's something that will make your ears leap right off your head to hear tell of.

Old Grimes (testily). Out with it then.

The Old Woman (mysteriously). HE'S come ⁶back!

Old Grimes (looking at her in amazement). Wha—what do you mean? Not HIM! Not Mister George.

The Old Woman (delighted at the effect of her news). Who else should it be? Eh, but it's none other.

Old Grimes. No—you never mean it! It cannot be.

When last heard of he was in the Indies. Well now! Where can he have heard of it? Where can he be come from? Where is he now?

The Old Woman. He's sitting in the parlour of the "Boar" at this very minute—so they tell me. I did not see him there myself, but—

Old Grimes. Pshaw! Then it's nothing but one of the fairy-tales that Old Mother Clayton see floating in her teapot—or such-like. I thought as much.

The Old Woman. Nay, that it's not, Mister Grimes—so there! For I saw him with my own eyes as he walked down the street from the cross-roads where the coach had dropped him. Very woeful his face was—there's little doubt he has heard of the poor lamb's death. Lawk! you'd have thought it was a raging lion in the market-place—the way the folk stared at him.

Old Grimes. What business is it of theirs?—leaving their work to glower at what doesn't concern them. Well, I'll be off to the "Boar" and make an excuse of drinking a pint of ale—maybe I'll get a word with him.

The Old Woman. Look! here come some more of the neighbours—all agog with the news, I warrant you.

(*Enter several villagers, all in a state of wild excitement.*)

1st Villager. There—it is as I told you. So Mother Barton has told you the news already, Mister Grimes? What think you about it?

All Villagers (clustering round him). Aye, what think you of it, Mister Grimes?

Old Grimes (testily). What do I think of it? What should I think of it, but that it's no business of ours? I think nothing of it, I tell you. Cannot a gentleman, born and bred—for so he is, and I'd like to see the man that gainsays it—cannot a gentleman take a room at the “Boar” but ye must all glower and gibber as if the crack of Doom's beginning?

2nd Villager. What did I tell you? Old Grimes is always in his tantrums after a burying—it makes him think of what he'll come to some day.

The Old Woman. Stop it now, Robin Lurcher! If only you looked after your wife and poor little children as well as Mister Grimes after his churchyard—if you followed the pewter less and the plough more—you'd be a better man—you would that.

All the Villagers. Aye, that he would. Hold thy tongue, Robin—&c., &c.

(Robin subsides indignantly.)

A Villager. Now, Mister Grimes—what say you to the news?

Old Grimes. I say nothing to it. I will wait until I know whether it be true or not.

Another Villager. True—doubt it not—it's true enough—we all of us see it. What is more—he and she passed each other in the market-place. She was just a-coming out of Mister Meffles—what keeps the apothecary-shop—and they just looked at each other and passed on without never a word.

Old Grimes. That I know to be a lie.

The Villager. Not so—it's certain sure. Will Ranger here see it with his own eyes—being gone to Mister Meffles to buy a lotion for his sore back—did you not, William? He told me so himself.

(Will Ranger makes futile efforts to hide himself in the background.)

Old Grimes. Come forward, William Ranger. Can you say upon your honour that you see this?

W. Ranger (scratching his head mournfully). Nay, I did not see it myself—and Thomas Oughton lies if he says that so I told him. 'Twas Mary Pollock told me—she see^d them meet—did you not, Mary?

Mary Pollock. Why, William Ranger, how can you dare say such a thing? I wonder the sky doesn't fall in upon you. I see nothing of it. 'Twas Mother Saker told me. She see it all through her window.

Old Grimes. And her window looking over the pig-stye and away from the street all the time. Think you the old woman rose from her bed and walked into the other room—that's been bedridden this ten years—on purpose for that one minute. It's a lie, all of it—that's what it is. I have been in this churchyard ever since the funeral—and I have had my eyes on the Parsonage gate all the time—where she went in when it was over along of Parson, and she has never stirred out of the door all the time. (*Snapping his fingers.*) That for your stories.

R. Lurcher. Trust Old Grimes to keep his eyes on Parson's gate till she do come out. On the look-out for drinking money—I'll be bound.
(*The villagers guffaw loudly.*)

Old Grimes (angrily). Come now—I've had enough of this. Get you to your own affairs and leave me to go about mine. Out with you. Here comes Parson—a nice talking-to you'll have if he sees you.

(The villagers exeunt somewhat hastily, talking among themselves. Old Grimes takes a large pocket-knife out of his pocket, and begins scratching at the lettering of the old tombstone on which he sits. Enter Parson Brabazon.)

Parson Brabazon. What—Grimes—still in the churchyard? Your tea will be waiting for you.

Old Grimes. 'Tis true. I had lost myself in thinking and in cleaning up my old grandfather here.

Parson Brabazon. Cleaning your old grandfather! Oh! I see—his tombstone. Ha, ha! Very good that.

Old Grimes. He was a gardener, sir, but I think he must have been a bad one, or the moss would never have been so ready to make his name unreadable.

Parson Brabazon. Ha! Very good that, Grimes—very good. Now I want you to leave the churchyard, and to see that none of the people come into it. The poor child is growing restless, and I think she wants to come out to cry over her baby's grave. I came out on purpose to warn you.

Old Grimes. No, no, sir! She mustn't come here now. You must see to it, sir, that she doesn't leave the door to-day.

Parson Brabazon. Not come out! Why, in Heaven's name, should she not? It is but natural. Poor child!—surely she may come to weep beside the door through which her little one passed to Heaven.

Old Grimes. Sir, sir! Master George be at this minute in the "Boar." He will be bound to come here. It would do them no good to meet on such a day as this.

Parson Brabazon. George Barraclough at the "Boar!" How came he there? How dared he come there? By Heaven, but I'll see to it that he doesn't pollute this air long.

Old Grimes. Parson Brabazon, would you bar the father from coming to the graveside of his own child?

Parson Brabazon. The child whom he deserted—and whose mother he left to starve—or worse, for all he cared—the—the—scoundrel.

Old Grimes. He did no such a thing. She ordered him out of her sight and swore she would never speak to him again, not on her dying day. He told me so with the tears running out of his eyes. You all turned on him—all but the poor old sexton—but I'll never stand by and hear him miscalled not while I've a tongue in my head.

Parson Brabazon. No—no—Grimes—it is not so. George Barraclough told his wife that he had never loved her and had only married her to please his dead mother, of all ridiculous nonsense—and he left her, without another word, two months after her child was born—that we buried this morning.

Old Grimes. It is a lie, sir—asking your pardon. 'Twas not in Master George to behave so. Why, I held him in my own arms thirty years ago—I've tended him and loved him as if he were my own son—there's not a tombstone in this churchyard that we haven't played hide-and-seek over—and you tell me that he could behave like that. It's against nature.

Parson Brabazon. Grimes, you are an obstinate, pig-headed old man. I tell you this deplorable quarrel was his fault entirely.

Old Grimes. Parson Brabazon, I have divided the duties of this parish with you for five-and-thirty years come next Michaelmas, but after the words you have spoken about my dear boy this day—if ever I dig another grave in this churchyard may I be the first to go into it.

(Enter Love through the Lych-gate, through which he has been watching the quarrel for some minutes. He is dressed as a traveller.)

Love. Why, gentlemen, what's the matter? Quarrelling in a churchyard—and one of you a clergyman! fie—fie!

Parson Brabazon. Well, sir, and what business is it of yours? (*He looks into Love's face, who smiles at him.*) Upon my word—you're right, sir. I ought to be ashamed of myself. Come, Grimes, my dear old friend (*holding out his hand*), I'll say I'm an old fool, if you'll say you're another.

Old Grimes. Fool, sir, I'm worse—I'm an obstinate old blackguard that ought to be put in the pillory. Forgive me, my dear master; you know I'd dig my own grave and jump into it with pleasure if you only held up your little finger—may we never have another quarrel if I wouldn't.

Parson Brabazon. Grimes, old friend—you're an elderly angel, whose wings have forgotten to sprout. But I was right, Grimes.

Old Grimes. Asking your pardon, sir, but you're no such a thing.

Parson Brabazon. I tell you—

Love. Gentlemen, will you not explain to me the subject in dispute? Might not a third party arbitrate your differences?

Parson Brabazon. My dear sir, Old Grimes here and I

have quarrelled over this subject every day this five years—but, upon my honour, sir, this is the first time it ever entered my head to take a third opinion on it.

Old Grimes. 'Tis very true, sir. We'll leave it to you to decide. I can see from your face that you have wandered about the world long enough to gain some knowledge of it.

Parson Brabazon. For such a young man, sir, you have certainly a look of being well-experienced in the world's ways. I mean it, of course, only in the better sense.

Old Grimes. A young man, sir! That I'll swear the gentleman's not.

Parson Brabazon. Hold your tongue, Grimes. I will not be contradicted. Anybody but a fool could see that he is not yet five-and-twenty. Am I not right, sir?

Old Grimes. Asking your pardon, sir, and meaning no offence to the gentleman, I am certain sure that he will never see sixty again, for all his lissom figure and bright eyes.

Parson Brabazon. Tush, Grimes! Will nothing cure you of your abominable obstinacy?

Love. Gentlemen, gentlemen!—surely my age is not the point in question.

Parson Brabazon. I stand corrected, sir. This, then, is the cause of our dispute. Consider, sir, that a young and beautiful girl, having a mind even fairer than her face, being the daughter of my oldest friend—God rest his soul!—marries a young man—

Old Grimes. As handsome as an archangel's tombstone, with a disposition out of all question beyond it—and the son, sir, of my dear old friend and master, who was the best-considered physician in all this county for more than thirty years—God rest his soul!

Love. Did these two love each other, sirs?

Parson Brabazon. I don't know about Love, sir, which is a passion more fit for poets than sensible people—but their parents arranged the matter, with my cognisance and approbation, and I have never heard that she made any objection to it.

Old Grimes. Master George had a sincere esteem for the young lady, sir, for so I heard him tell his dear father, who is lying there at this very minute (*pointing to a grave*).

Love. Then, gentlemen, I think we may leave Love out of the question, for I have heard he does not usually go hand-in-hand with obedience or sincere esteem.

Parson Brabazon. This, sir, is not a question of heroics but of plain matter-of-fact. For some eighteen months or so they lived more or less happily together.

Old Grimes. With no more wrangling than is proper between husband and wife.

Parson Brabazon. Then, one fine day, he deserts her, sir—leaves her, after some petty quarrel, in which he was entirely in the wrong, and goes off without another word. She, poor girl—and this is the proof that the fellow is a scoundrel—would have actually gone after him, practically on her knees, to beg him to come back, so forgiving is she, had not one or two friends seen to it that there should be no further meeting between them until he apologised. Why, sir, the poor girl might have starved had it not happened that her father had left a small competency behind him.

Old Grimes. She told him, sir, that she had never loved him, and that either he must leave her house—*her* house, mark you—or she would. Master George, being a young gentleman with a proper pride, although I do believe he would have gone through fire and water to come back to her if she would have only given him the

chance—he left the village, as Parson says—but first, sir, he made over every penny he had in the world to her name, as Lawyer Turnbull could tell you. He 'listed in a marching regiment, and for a year he cleaned stables and sullied his fingers with pipe-clay, and he a gentleman born and bred. Later, being gone with his regiment to the North American Colonies, and being a favourite with all his officers, which you would not think strange, sir, did you know the young gentleman, his colonel gave him his discharge, and he went into the backwoods, whatever they are, and there he made money, and every penny of it beyond his bare keep he sent it back to her, who was living in luxury all this time, when many's the time as I know for a fact that he hasn't had the wherewithal to pay the sexton's fees if he should need to be buried. To-day, sir, he's come back to his own village, and he's sitting broken-hearted in the "Boar's" best parlour, grieving for his little girl-child whose grave I filled in not two hours since.

Parson Brabazon. As to the money you mention that he sent—no doubt with the idea of making himself appear in the right—I have myself

been most careful to see that she did not open the envelopes covering it, or read the letters enclosed with it. Every letter that came, with the money it enclosed, if any, is now in Lawyer Turnbull's strong box, unopened, waiting for him to claim it. You must understand, sir, that we do not even know, beyond Grimes' belief, that they did contain money. Pray, friend Grimes, how do you come to know so much of his travels and adventures?

Old Grimes. Because, Parson Brabazon, many and many's the letter I have myself had from him, blotted with his tears, sir, telling me about himself, in the hope that she might care to know, and asking how all was going with her and the little one—but I, sir, am not the one to stand by and see a poor young gentleman wronged without having my say. I have told him what I thought of it and her in many a letter, and twice I stopped him in the nick of time from coming home and making a fool of himself by asking her to pardon him for the wrong she did him. If only I had known where a letter would have reached him, or even that he was in England, he would never have been here now, I can promise you. And now, sir,

perhaps you will say which of us you think is in the wrong.

Love. In truth, gentlemen, I think there is much to be said on both sides. It seems to me that a possibly slight disagreement, that might easily have been righted, has been kept open by the foolish officiousness of injudicious friends.

Parson Brabazon. The very thing that I have been saying all along. (*Aside*) One for Old Grimes.

Old Grimes. Indeed, sir, I have often thought it myself. (*Aside*) Wonder how Parson likes that.

Love. You will be surprised, gentlemen, to learn that it is about this very business that I am come here to-day. (*They both express great surprise.*) It is a fact. I am by profession—(*he smiles*)—a maker-up of differences.

Old Grimes. I thought so all along. The gentleman is an attorney like Mr. Turnbull, surely.

Love (smiling). Nay, sir, I am not a lawyer.

Parson Brabazon. You mean an actuary, sir. I have but little knowledge of business terms, but my brother, who is a dealer in stocks and shares, tells me that such is the profession of an actuary.

Love. I am not an actuary either—but stay—here comes the lady herself. I beg that you will enter

the church for a short time. Perhaps I may be able to show you something shortly that will please you both. Quickly!—I do not wish her to see you.

Parson Brabazon. By all means, if you wish it. I should be loth to intrude upon her sorrow. Come, Grimes! You, sir, will you not accompany us? We have, I assure you, sir, if you are interested in such things, one of the finest fifteenth century brasses—

Love. I have a particular reason for staying here. In her present state of mind she will never notice my presence, I can assure you. Quickly, sir, quickly!

(Parson Brabazon and Old Grimes exeunt up the path into the porch. As they go:—)

Parson Brabazon. Upon my honour, Grimes, I was never so taken with a young man in all my life.

Old Grimes. Truly, sir, he seems as nice an old gentleman as you might meet in a day's ride, in a manner of speaking.

(Exeunt. Love leans upon an upstanding tombstone, with his arms crossed over it. Enter the Wife. She walks immediately past Love, but does not appear to see him. She

stops in front of the newly-made grave, and looks down upon it with a very miserable face.)

The Wife. Even his hard heart might soften a little if he could see me in my loneliness.

Love (taking up her words, so that it appears as if what he says is a part of her soliloquy). I sometimes wonder, in spite of Mister Brabazon, if it may not have been my fault—as well as his.

The Wife. What am I saying? My fault! how was it in any way my fault? Has any husband the right to treat a wife as he has treated me?

Love. He was high-tempered and cruelly proud, but did I not bear my full share in all our quarrels?

The Wife. He said things to me that no woman could bear.

Love. But did I not give him back every bitter word he ever spoke?—did I not answer in my heart every bitter thought he ever cherished, even before he felt them?

The Wife. Why should I have such thoughts? It must be because I am so lonely—so very lonely. He never loved me.

Love. No, no!—it is not true. He loved me dearly. I know it. I cannot lie to myself. Did I return

his love?—or, returning it, did I open my heart to him and show the love within it?

The Wife. I must be going mad. How can I doubt myself in this way? He is gone out of my life. If I saw him again I would not speak to him.

Love. How foolish are such thoughts, when all the time I know that I am longing every moment of the day for the sound of his footsteps, and that for a kiss from his dear lips I would resign even my hopes of meeting my little one in Heaven.

The Wife. I will not think such things. He left me without a word. He has made no effort to see me again—to beg my forgiveness. I am false to the memory of the little child whom he deserted even to think of him at such a time.

Love. She was his child as well as mine. Oh how blessed I was before these evil times to think that she was his as well as mine—that she was both of us eternally in one—and he, how happy he looked the day when first he saw his little child. He loved her too. Oh that he would come back to me that pray for his forgiveness beside her grave!—he could not turn from me then.

The Wife. No, no—I never will! I never will!

Love. If I could but see him now I would fall at his feet and kiss them.

The Wife. Never! I swear it! (*She clutches at her throat.*) I shall faint! I shall faint! I cannot bear it.

(*She staggers towards the seat on right and sits down upon it. It is so shaded by the branches of the large yew-tree as not to be noticeable by anyone not directly looking at it. She buries her face in her hands, resting upon the back of the seat, and sobs. Love follows her across the stage smiling.*)

Love. I love him! I love him!—in spite of everything I love him.

The Wife (faintly). No—no—no!

(*The Husband enters through the Lych-gate. He is in travelling costume, but looks dishevelled and travel-stained. He stands for some moments looking about him narrowly, then, seeing the newly-made grave, he goes towards it.*)

The Husband. My little child—my little child! (*He throws himself upon his face beside the grave and kisses the headstone. He then rises quickly and turns as if to go. He turns again and looks yearningly at the grave.*) Had I

known before I came that she would be in the village, even this would have been denied me. Thank God, she will never know that I have been here—she cannot interfere between us even in thought. My God! when I think of her I almost hate her.

Love (picking up his words in the same manner as before). No—no—I love her all the time—and if I saw her now I could but tell her so.

The Husband (laughing to himself contemptuously). Pshaw! What tricks a man's thoughts play with him. I almost wish that she was here—I could prove my own thoughts so completely in the wrong. (He bends down, takes a few blades of grass from beside the grave, and sets them carefully in his bosom.) Now I can leave England and not feel that I am shouldered out of all association with my little one's resting-place.

(He turns again to go. As he does so he comes full face-to-face with his wife, who has risen from the seat and is walking towards the grave without noticing him. They both stop dead and stare into each other's faces for a moment, then, recollecting themselves, pass onwards without further sign of recognition.)

Love (who has come forward so that he now stands mid-way between them). Can you pass me by, even at the graveside of our child—and not give one single thought to the love you used to bear me? *(They both stop immediately and stand intently listening.)* Without a sign—without even a tear for our dead love? *(Sighs deeply. A pause. Their breath is heard coming in great gasps.)* Dearest, if I said that it was I who was in the wrong—as indeed I think I may have been—could not your heart soften enough to give me one kind look such as you used to—before we part for ever?

The Wife (aside). Can this be true?

The Husband (aside). Am I awake or dreaming?

Love. Dearest one, can you not even now forgive me? I cannot bear that we should part again—and that beside the grave where both our hearts lie buried. It was I who was in the wrong—I see it now—I was too proud to know it at the time. Dearest, have I not been punished for it enough even now? Oh! from the bottom of my heart I beg you to forget—think only how dearly you once loved me, and how dearly I love you now and always. I know I do not any longer deserve your love. Can you not feel for me one

little drop of pity? (*They half turn towards each other, still listening intently.*) No? (*with a deep sigh*). Not one little drop of pity to quench the fire of shame and loneliness that is eating at my heart?

Both. No, no! you must not speak so. I was as much to blame.

The Husband. My darling wife!

The Wife. My husband!

Both. Thank God!

(*They rush into each other's arms and embrace rapturously. Love looks on with a smiling face. At the same moment Parson Brabazon and Old Grimes peep out of the porch together. They each grip at the other's coat-sleeve and point to the reconciled lovers.*)

Parson Brabazon (aside). He's done it! I knew he would! I don't believe there's such another young man in all the world!

Old Grimes (aside). If I don't find that dear old gentleman sitting in Heaven when I reach there—may I never live to dig my own grave—as you might say.

C U R T A I N .

THE OTHER PLAY,
BEING THE FIFTH,
CALLED A MASTER
OF ART ♣ ♣





A MASTER OF ART.

Scene.—The country near Angers. *Time.*—circa 1450.



C H A R A C T E R S

François Villon, *Master of Arts, Poet, and Thief.*

**Beloquet, Niltacque, Fliquant, *Three
of his Friends and Accomplices.***

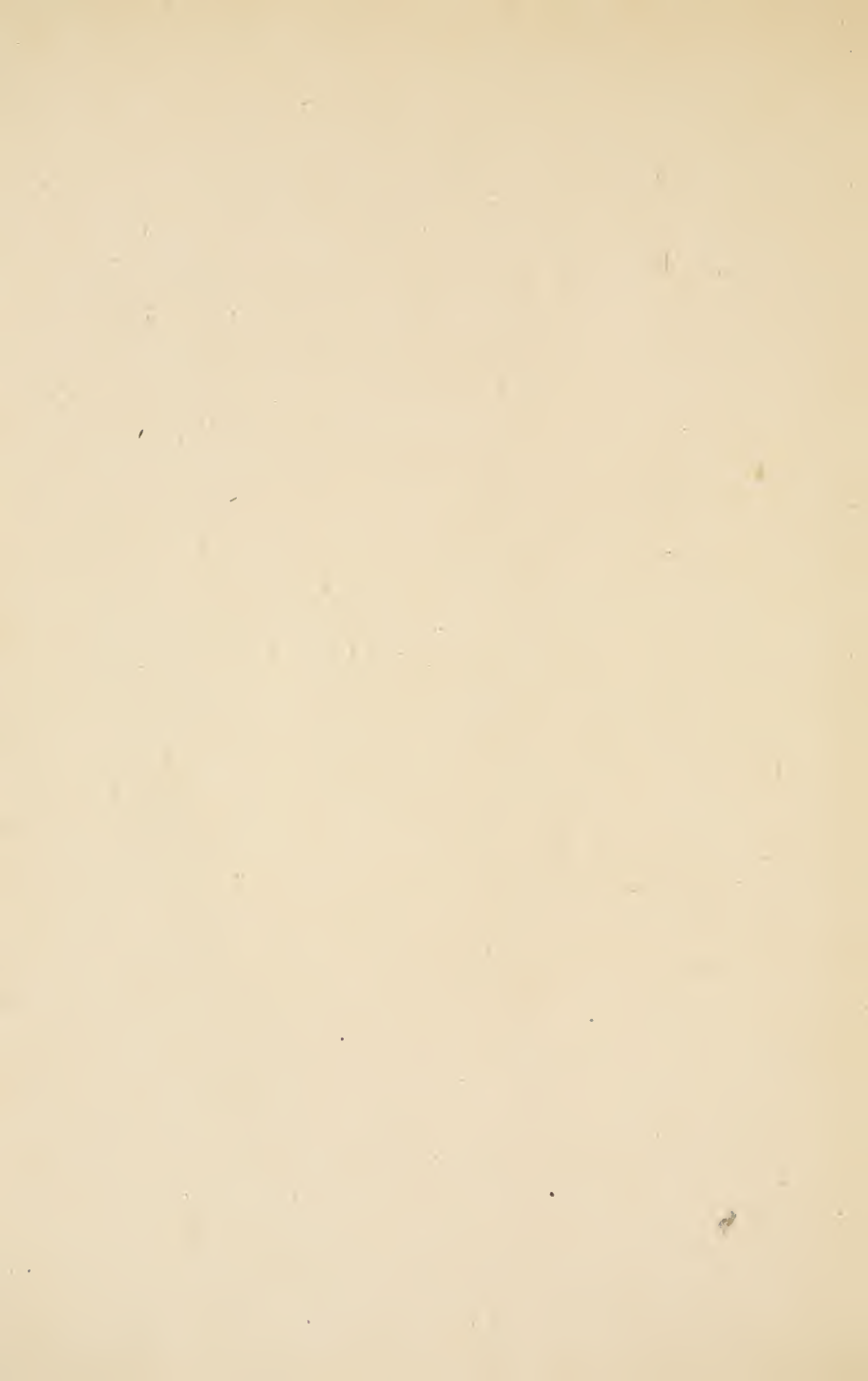
Nicholas Lenoir, *a Prior of Angers.*

**Mother Villemer, *an old
Peasant Woman.***

A Head Thief-taker.

Six Thief-takers.



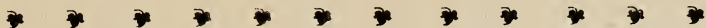


A MASTER OF ART.

✻ *SCENE.*—A coppice on the road leading to Angers. The scene is a steep hill-side with the road leading up it aslant from right to left. In the very front of the stage, so that the action takes place between them, are the stems of two great pine-trees, whose dark green foliage fills the upper part of the proscenium. Over the brow of the lower part of the hill can be seen a wide view of mountainous country, covered for the most part with dense woods, spreading up from a great river. Hard by the banks of the river is a town sloping up a hill, on the top of which stands a frowning castle.

✻ On the trunk of a fallen pine-tree on the higher side of the road, and with the shadow of the thicket behind him—so that his face is in high relief—is seated Villon. He is panting and holding his hand to his side. At first he is seen to frown and finger the blade of a long knife, but in a little his features relax, and he smiles the smile of one who knows the laugh is against him.

✻ He is shabbily dressed in black, with the marks of much dust upon his clothes, which are torn in many places. He has red hair, and a clean-shaven face much seamed with dissipation, but not unkindly.



Villon. I can run no more. Too much drink is bad for a fellow's wind (*pants*), but I'll catch them if I have to go to Hell to find them (*laughing*), and, after all, that's the most likely place to search for them. The mangy devils, to fill me with wine and leave me sleeping on the bench till the host came for the reckoning. Chased me three miles, the fellow did, with all the scum of the village, but they must run fast who want to catch François Villon. The worst of it is, poor Nick Villemer must be hanged. Let me see, it is four days since we left Paris, quick march; we had 18 livres then. There were six left when we left Le Mans this morning; 40 sols went at Malicorne, the liquor was good there though; 70 at Duital, beastly stuff that, fit for pigs; another 30 at Seiches, fair, but over new. A livre I lost at play to the horse-coper at St. Roche, and the rest? The knaves must have picked my purse when I lay asleeping, for devil a sou is there left. I see little good in going to Angers, if it wasn't for the chance of letting a knife into one of those three. Mighty fine it would be to go to old Caletoché, the gaoler, and say, "Worshipful sir, I am come to ask you to leave the gate open

and let my old friend and schoolmate Nick Villemer slip out when your back's turned. I've got no money, but I daresay you'll trust me for it till you see me again.' I can see the old fellow's jolly purple nose turn pink at the edges. No, they'll hang poor Nick as sure as I'm a Master of Arts. But I'll go on to Angers for all that. I know I'll find those three at old Mother Fanlieu's, and I'll creep up while they're sleeping, and if I don't slit their noses till they bleed like pigs, I'm no poet. Any way I'll go and see my old Coz Lenoir, and tell him a story or two from Paris till his jolly old sides shake and he gives me a present and a lecture. There's the old Seneschal too, if the tale of Kate, the "belle Ferroniere," don't get a good supper out of him and a clinking God-speed for the morrow, I'm no man. I'll make him put those three in the stocks for tramps and vagabonds. Then I'll go and pelt them with mud and make faces at them. No, I forgot, I stole a pair of boots from the Seneschal last time; I daren't go there. Hallo! Who comes here? She's lost something. She doesn't look very strong, perhaps if it was valuable I could sneak it from her. How now, venerable lady, what

is your trouble? Sure you must have lost something?

(Enter an old woman from left, searching on the ground and weeping. Villon leaps up and begins to scan the road narrowly, running backwards and forwards. The old woman also goes on looking and crying while she is talking.)

Mother Villemer. Oh, sir. Only find it for me and I will bless you every day of my life. Oh! I must have dropped it. It must be somewhere here. I have scanned every inch of the road back, and I'm near worn out. Oh! my poor boy, what shall I do? Oh! alas, alas, I can search no more. Oh! find it for me, sir, and the saints will bless you; your young eyes are sharper than my old ones.

Villon. Tell me at least what you have lost, that I can know what to look for, venerable old lady.

Mother V. It is a little bag with four pieces of gold. It must be easily seen, but my poor old eyes are too weak to see it.

Villon. A bag of four pieces of gold! Never fear that I shall find it. Trouble no more about it, old lady; get you gone home and I will find it and bring it to you.

Mother V. Oh! but I must find it at once. It is late now, and I must be in Angers by six, or they'll

hang my poor boy in the morning, and I'll never see him again, and oh! I've lost the money. I'll never find it. Oh! what will I do? what will I do?

Villon (aside). Hang her poor boy in the morning—that's getting near home. They'll hang me in the morning some fine day, but I'll have never an old mother to weep for my loss. I killed her three years back with my ill deeds, but (*with a sigh of relief*) I'll hang for it yet. (*Aloud.*) There, there, mother, don't take on so; crying won't bring you back your money, when perhaps talking will. Tell me how you lost this money and where you think it can have been.

Mother V. I had it safe in my pocket this morning when I started to walk to Angers, and I kept my hand on it all the time. Then suddenly, I had just got to the top of the hill, and I rested there a bit because the day was hot and my old legs a-weary. Then when I got up to go on I felt in my pocket, and, oh! it had gone. Oh! what will I do?

Villon. When did you last feel it for certain in your pocket?

Mother V. It was just after I passed yonder tree, for

I heard a rustling among the bushes; it must have been a hare, and it frightened me, for I am an old body, and I put my hand to my pocket and felt, and then because I could see no one I took it out and looked at it, standing just here as it might be. And when I got to the top of the hill it was gone, and I have searched every inch of the way, but I can't see it, and oh! my poor boy will be hanged for sure.

Villon. Did no one pass you on the way?

Mother V. Only three young gentlemen, but they didn't take it, so kind they were and well spoken. A little bit merry they might have been, but nothing to speak of. Very good to me they were, and one of them gave me his arm to the top of the hill, and another carried my bag for me. Then at the top they gave me such a bow, they did, and took their hats off, all three of them, like young noblemen.

Villon. The lousy villains! They stole it for certain.

Mother V. Indeed and they did not, that I'm sure of. For when we got to the top of the hill they wanted to give me some sous, and said it was a shame that such a venerable dame should have to walk afoot in the broiling sun. Oh!

no, I must have dropped it on the road and some one must have picked it up, and I'll never see it again. Oh! my poor Nicholas.

Villon (aside). The beasts must have been lying here hiding in the bracken when the old dame passed, and they saw her looking at her money and followed her. Mean devils they are—never even offered to share it with me. There'd have been one apiece all round. (*Aloud.*) Where do you say you thought you heard a rustling?

Mother V. Just beneath yonder pine tree.

(*Villon goes over and looks at it.*)

Villon (aside). Humph! I thought so. They must have been lying there where the bracken is all crushed. Hullo! What's this? (*Takes a piece of paper down from where it had been stuck on a branch, and reads it under cover of his hand.*) "To F. V., if he should pass this way and be sober enough to read." (That's meant for me, no doubt.) "Had a stroke of luck. Come to us at you know where, and you shall share it, though you don't deserve it, for a drunken wood-louse that you are." Now I do call that nice of them—they're true hearts every one, and I wronged them. We'll have a rousing time at old Mother Fanlieu's yet. This is a

stroke of luck indeed, just when I thought I was penniless, but true it is that the Devil protects his own. Hallo! here's the old dame, I'd quite forgotten her. (*Aloud.*) Tell me, mother, what you wanted with the four gold pieces so particularly. I'm not a rich man, only a poor Master of Arts of the University of Paris, travelling at his leisure to view the country, but I might be of some slight service to you for all that.

Mother V. Of the University of Paris, did you say? Oh! then you will know my poor boy Nicholas, and may be able to help him out of his trouble. The best of sons he always was to me, until he went to Paris; always a bit given to the monks' parchments, which are not good for a young man, but a dear good fellow. If you are one of his masters there, no doubt he will have learnt under you, and you will be able to say a good word for him up at the Castle and perhaps save him.

Villon. Nay, mother, that is too much to hope; my poor words carry little weight. What was your son's name?

Mother V. Nicholas Villemer, and a good son he was, poor fellow, and they'll be hanging him to-morrow.

Villon. Nicholas Villemer!! Oh! to be sure—I seem to know his name, to be sure I do, a bright promising lad he was. Many's the day we've had together, ei-yes,—at Greek—and—Latin—and—er—Paracelsus. Nicholas Villemer, yes to be sure, but now I think of it he hasn't attended my classes lately. I thought he must have been ill.

Mother V. True enough. Sick and sorry he has been, woe's me, woe's me. It's three weeks ago he came back to the farm. His father's dead, God be thanked, for he was a proud man. Sick and sorry my poor boy was, and he told me all his troubles. It seems that there are a terrible set of young men at Paris, and he, poor innocent, got led away by them. And oh me! he told me terrible tales of the goings on there; one François Villon was the leader of them—may God's anger smite him that led my poor boy away. Terrible things they did, drinking and worse, thieving and worse, and my boy tells me that Villon has done a power of murders and robbed a holy church of the very holy vessels, and there's never a place in Hell that's hot enough for him, God forgive me for saying so. Broke his mother's heart, he did, so they say,

and now he's broken mine. Oh! alas! and what will I do for to-morrow?

Villon. Enough of this fellow Villon. I have heard of him, and a ruffian he is in truth, though we are told the Devil is not as black as he is painted, and a great poet he is, this same Villon, the greatest in France, I make no doubt; but about your son, my young pupil?

Mother V. Well, he came back to the farm, and sick and sorry he was, and very penitent, and it seems that before he left, this same Villon had robbed a holy priest, and my poor Nicholas had been led into keeping watch while he robbed, but they were disturbed and one of them was caught, and they put him to the torture, and he confessed everything.

Villon. Eh? What? The damned traitor!

Mother V. He told all their names and where they were to be found, and the thief-takers came and took my son three days ago, and oh! he is to be hanged to-morrow.

Villon. What of the others? Quick! are they caught?

Mother V. No, but they say that it is known where hands can be laid on them—indeed, I heard in the village that they were hiding not far from this place, so 'tis said, and they are to be

caught to-night, if it is true, and be hanged in the morning with my son—their black souls with his white one, poor lamb!

Villon. Um—indeed!

Mother V. So yesterday I travelled to Angers—four leagues it is—to say goodbye and “God bless you” to my son, and I saw the gaoler—a good, kind gentleman—and he said if I could find ten pieces of gold he thought that my son might be let free, as he was the least guilty. I told him I hadn’t such a sum in the world, but that I thought I could find four—all my savings that are left to me, for my dear Nicholas cost me a deal of money—and he said he would take that if I would give also the donkey that I keep to gather firewood, and the grey duffle shawl that I was wearing; and now, oh! I’ve lost the money, and I’ll never see my poor Nicholas again in this world—nor in the next, for I’ve never a penny to give the priest to fetch his soul out of Purgatory.

Villon (*shading his eyes and looking down the road*). If you want a priest—though I never knew one but needed a golden key to open the gate of Purgatory—here comes one riding—and a

fat one at that—that'll find the gates of Heaven, let alone Purgatory, too narrow to let him walk in, unless he squeezes through sideways. (*Aside*) By the mass, it's my old coz, father Nicholas, by all that's lucky. (*Aloud*) Old lady, the holy priest that is coming up the road is high in authority at the Bishop's court in Angers, and, what's more important, a particular friend of my own. Get you into the wood, for you mustn't be seen. Maybe some good may come of our meeting. Quick! quick!

Mother V. The Lord bless you for wishing to help my poor son, and forgive François Villon for leading him to destruction.

(The old woman goes out into the wood behind. Villon sits down by the wayside, looking dejected. Father Nicholas enters, seated on a donkey.)

Villon. Well met, reverend father Nicholas! The saints preserve you—though such a wish is needless, for there's little doubt but there's a special angel set to keep your place warm in Heaven.

Father N. (in a full, deep voice). Ay, and a special devil to keep your place warm in Hell, François Villon. But what in holy Nicholas's name—

that's the patron saint of thieves, and likely to take an interest in you—are you doing here? Don't you know that the thief-takers are raising Heaven and earth to find you about here? Why, I passed a body of them in the village, not two leagues back.

Villon. The devil you did!

Father N. You are surely mad. *Quem Deus vult decipere.....*

Villon. True, my father, but Paris was a place too hot for me, and for fear of being sent to one still warmer, I thought I would pay a visit to you.

Father N. Certainly you could expect but a cold welcome after your last exploit. This time I'll have none of you. A rape or a murder or two I can put up with, for they are not beyond prayer, but when it comes to robbing Holy Church—

Villon. Nay! father, I robbed but Father Joscelin, the rude fellow that openly preached at you as a wine-swilling, guzzling, lecherous old evil-doer.

Father N. Oh! Father Joscelin, was it? A bad man that, François, an evil-thinking, evil-living mischief-maker. Nevertheless, we are told to forgive our enemies and those that despitefully use us.

Villon. True, but not those who spitefully use our uncles. He's a knave, that Joscelin—a lanky, lantern-jawed knave. I'll tell you a story or two about him when we sit over our wine to-night. I've something new about Margot, too—you remember Margot, the pretty glover's-girl. Why, you remember—not that night in—

Father N. Hush, my son, we are in a public place. Nevertheless, I am very sorry you came here; you should have stopped in Paris. Angers is humming with your name. I doubt if I shall be able to hide you, and remember, if you are caught, I know nothing of you, never heard your name. Had you not better slip back to Paris while there is time?

Villon. Ah! my father, I am come on an errand of mercy. Poor young Villemer—

Father N. Aye, I've heard of him, a young fool—he's to be hanged to-morrow. A brave fellow too. They say they racked him three times, but not a word would he say. I like a man like that.

Villon. It was on his account I came down here. I brought with me four livres to bribe old Caletoche, the gaoler.

Father N. What, do you know him?

Villon. Wasn't it yourself that made us acquainted?

That time when we smuggled Jehanne out of the gaol into the refectory dressed in a priest's robe.

Father N. Sh—sh—To be sure, yes.

Villon. And the Bishop swore he'd inhibit you. How is the Bishop?

Father N. Flourishing, curse him. He swears I'm a disgrace to the priesthood.

Villon. No!!

Father N. He did, in open meeting; bid me beware, for the Church has long arms and a deep memory.

Villon. And a deep pocket, for that matter. Well, perhaps I had better not come to the Priory to-night. If the Bishop got wind of it—

Father N. I'd like to see the bishop that dare come to pry at my Priory without my permission. Nay, Francis, come you shall, though all the bishops in France tried to stop you.

Villon. But I was saying, father, I came down here furnished with money for old—

Father N. If you've got money you are safe enough. I needn't trouble about your worthless neck, nor your friend's either.

Villon. But, father, I was tempted to give it all to a poor old woman who asked alms. You know how impulsive I am.

Father N. To a poor old wine-shop keeper who wouldn't liquor you without. No, no, I wasn't born yesterday. I have 40 livres in my pouch, but not a penny goes to you. You and your friends may all flame in perdition before I give you a drop of water you don't pay for.

Villon. The parable reversed! Poor Abraham!

Father N. Hist! Get you gone into the wood. There's a crowd coming down the road there.

(Villon slips behind the trees. Father N. sits in middle of stage, on mule, and thumbles his beads. Several thief-takers enter down hill, dragging with them the three accomplices of Villon, and pushing them roughly along.)

Father N. Nay, my son, treat not the young men so roughly. They are but striplings.

1st Thief-taker. They are the smartest thieves in Paris, except one, and a nice hunt they've led us. Been robbing a church, your reverence.

Beloquet. I was 300 miles away when the church was robbed. I am a student of Paris University, studying theology.

The Thief-taker. You can keep that story till you're on the rack, young man. They got it out of your friend Villemer quick enough.

Niltaque. The rack! oh! not the rack! Oh! I'll confess everything.

Gauthier. Hold your tongue, craven. They'll get nothing out of me.

Father N. But why do you take them in this direction, my friends? Surely you should rather lead them to Angers, over the hill?

Thief-taker. They tell us—at least this beauty does (*pointing to Niltaque*)—the others are game enough—that the leader of the gang, one François Villon, who's wanted all over France, is lying drunk on a tavern bench at the village down the hill there, and if we get him, he's worth more than all the rest put together.

Niltaque. These men promised they would let me go free if I told them where Villon was—make them, your reverence. I can tell them more. If they don't find him there, they have only got to look at the house of a priest in Angers—a drunken, dissolute—

Father N. Peace, my son, peace! I do not love a thief who betrays his comrades, as thou seemest to be—and a liar to boot. Take them away, friends—the sight of such wickedness interferes with my devotion.

(*He blesses the thief-takers, who exeunt with their captives. When they are gone Villon appears.*)

Father N. A nice hornets' nest you've brought about your ears, my young friend. You ought to have stopped in Paris. Anyone but a fool would have seen that.

Villon. Dear father, lend me but a little of your store, to be repaid a hundredfold as soon as may be, and I will never trouble you more.

Father V. Of that I am quite sure. But I tell you, not a farthing will you get out of me.

Villon. It's very hard. Here I leave Paris on purpose to give a little amusement to my best friend, and when I reach him I find that he's so afraid of his bishop—a bishop, too, that was once his own acolyte—a poor boy that trembled when he lifted his finger—that he daren't take a friend into his house without asking the Bishop for permission.

Father N. Ten thousand devils fly away with the Bishop and you too. I tell you, François, that you can shelter as safely in my house as if you were the Pope of Rome in his palace, and there's never a bishop or prince in France dare lay a finger on you; but as to giving you money—

Villon. Then, my dear protector, I may shelter myself under your roof. Oh! my dear, dear, kind friend.

(Throws his arms round Father N., as he sits on his donkey, and sobs loudly.)

Father N. Ay, you may come, and welcome; but I tell you fairly, François Villon, that if I find you rob me as you did last time, ay, if I find that you have taken so much as a grain of wheat or a thimbleful of wine, I'll hang you. Hanged you'll be as sure as there's a God in Heaven.

Villon *(sobbing)*. My dear, dear, kind friend!

(As he speaks the priest and donkey are in profile to the audience, only Villon's arms being seen round his body. During this time Villon's hand is in the priest's wallet, and he is taking the money out of it.)

Father N. That's enough, no snivelling. I don't like it. Now you get into the wood until dark. When it is dark come to my house, through the garden in the old way, knock at the window and I will be ready for you.

(He rides off. Villon kisses his hand to him until he is out of sight. When he is quite gone Villon whistles to the old woman, who comes out. She looks very ruffled as if she had had a struggle.)

Mother V. Oh! why wouldn't you let me come out

when they were here? They were the young men who took my money. I might have saved my poor Nicholas.

Villon. Silly old woman, did you not tell those three wretched thieves what you were going to do with the money?

Mother V. Ay, 'tis true. I did so.

Villon. I was sure of it, and wouldn't they have told the thief-takers, and wouldn't you have been taken too, and perhaps put on the rack like them? No, no, you were wiser, because you couldn't help it, to do as I wanted.

Mother V. Oh! I suppose so, but I'd gladly have died if there had been a chance of saving my boy. And the holy priest would have saved me.

Villon. There was a particular reason—I can't tell you what it was, but you must trust me—there was a most particular reason why he shouldn't see you. But now listen. I have been talking to my dear friend the priest, and we have decided that you are a meritorious old lady, and on one condition we are going to give you the money to save your son.

Mother V. Oh! God shower his blessings upon you.

Villon. Here it is, four livres and one—one for the

donkey and duffle shawl ; but remember, every night of your life upon your bended knees you are to pray for the soul of poor François Villon. Do you promise?

Mother V. François Villon !! Well, it is for my poor boy's sake, but I would as soon pray for the Devil.

Villon. May be the Devil would be none the worse for a prayer or so, but do you promise?

Mother V. Ay, I promise faithfully. Perhaps he was led away too when he was a lad.

Villon. Perhaps he was, though he was never such a fool as your boy seems to be. Well, goodbye.

Mother V. But shall I never see you again, that I may thank you for your kindness?—though that I can never do enough. If you would only deign to come to my poor cottage, very welcome you would be. You surely will be stopping with your good friend the priest in Angers?

Villon. Nay, mother, the priest's house will be made too warm for my taste, these priests pamper themselves so—and indeed I suffer from an affection of the throat, and if I stopped in this air I feel that my neck would suffer, so I'll just back to Paris again and start work afresh.

Goodbye, but mind (*with intensity*), every
night of your life, on your bended knees, you
are to pray for the soul of poor François Villon.
God pity him!

Mother V. God pity him!

C U R T A I N





